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LIFE IN THE
North-West Mounted Police
AND
OTHER SKETCHES.

BY
CHAS. P. DWIGHT.

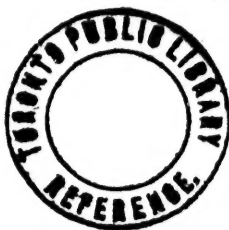


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PREFACE.

UPON my return to Toronto last April, after an absence of a year spent in knocking about the North-West in rather an unusual style, I set myself the task of writing out a brief sketch of my experience while away, as a matter of personal record.

Since that time I have had occasion to show this sketch of my somewhat unique experience to a number of friends, with the result that it now takes its present shape. If it affords a few hours of interesting reading, and throws any light upon life in the North-West Mounted Police and elsewhere to those in whose hands it may fall, I shall be well satisfied.

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I LEFT Toronto one raw, cheerless night in the latter part of the month of March, 1891, with no more definite object in view than to satisfy a desire, born of inherent restlessness and curiosity, to cut loose from my then present surroundings and acquaintances, and to sally forth for a space amidst strangers and influences new. My circumstances at the time were all that any young man could have reasonably desired, and although I would fain have been classed at this period amongst those whose wisdom in matters worldly was sufficient to teach them to know when they were well off, yet I fear the fact of having taken a step which lacked so little real purpose, and wherein my prospects and plans were of so vague a description, rather counted me out, in this particular, at all events. It was my first flight into the surrounding world under such circumstances, and the experience

which naturally followed my departure under these conditions, was, to a young man of my somewhat conventional type, of so varied and interesting a nature, that I have concluded to base a brief sketch of the period passed through, upon the events, as I now recall them, which befell me during my rambles abroad.

While no very definite object impelled my departure, my nomadic instincts were of a sufficiently tame nature, as were also my means at the time, to prohibit my wandering any considerable distance from the more beaten paths, although this, of course, detracted none from the novelty of the experience through which I passed during my twelve months' absence.

Being of a somewhat practical turn of mind at times, it was with complete nonchalance that I thus cut loose from home and friends, and launched myself on the subtle waves of fortune in this manner, nor can I now recall one ominous foreboding on my part as to ultimate results. Indeed, my feelings were rather hopeful than otherwise, and I was not inconsiderably buoyed up with the thought that fortune had on similar occasions, in her own peculiar fashion, smiled upon less likely individuals than myself, although I was not unconscious at the same time that ill luck—if I may use the term—had heretofore played rather an important part than otherwise in many of my comings and goings.

In an amazingly short time after deciding upon my departure, my preparations were complete, and soon after bidding *mes adieux* I found myself comfortably

installed aboard the Canadian Pacific express *en route*, if not directly to, at least in the direction indicated by America's great preceptor, Horace Greely, in his well-known advice to young men, namely, the land of the far West. This somewhat indefinite term undoubtedly possesses a peculiar fascination, both for the uninitiated as well as for those who have traversed to any extent those broad regions of America now immortalized in their ancient state of romantic freedom by innumerable tales of thrilling adventure, both wholesome and otherwise, which surround the noble red man of the past and his once happy hunting grounds: and for this reason my somewhat vague destination was quite agreeably in accord with my own peculiar frame of mind at this period.

On arrival at North Bay the following morning after leaving Toronto, I found myself obliged to remain off for several hours to await the arrival of the through express from Montreal, *en route* to the Pacific Coast, and occupied myself in the interim with sauntering about this growing and lively little town, to which this was my first visit, and which from all I could gather seemed destined to become a place of some importance at no very distant date. On arrival of the Pacific express I was soon under way again, and doomed to two more days and nights of unbroken confinement in the cars through a country possessing few outward attractions to relieve the tediousness of the long journey, and with few incidents by the way to disturb the serene tupidity of the trip.

On nearing Winnipeg, the prairie country, of which this was my first view, gradually asserted itself over the monotony of rocks and barrenness, which so predominates along this route, and it required some few moments of earnest reflection on my part to realize the fact that I was now approaching that "boundless West" wherein the erstwhile lordly bison was wont to roam and wallow at will, but whose glory, alas! has now vanished, till naught remains but sun-bleached bones as testimony of the wholesale slaughter which exterminated this once noble animal.

When within a few miles of Winnipeg, where I had after some deliberation, resolved to remain, for a time, at all events, I felt pretty well satisfied at the distance which I had so far succeeded in placing between myself and my Toronto home. The journey, as I have said, was long and tedious, however, and only made tolerable by the comfortable accommodation with which the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. has so carefully provided its patrons over this bleak and uninteresting route.

On arrival in Winnipeg I found myself in possession of no very definite plan of action for the future, and my means, which I have before mentioned as having been somewhat limited at the outstart, I discovered at this juncture to be painfully reduced, my long journey on the cars, with its incidental expenses, having effected this result to rather an alarming extent. I did hope to have sufficient, at least, to have enabled me to remain and look about Winnipeg for a time at my

leisure, but the cold fact, notwithstanding, soon faced me in all the sternness such facts are capable of assuming at times, and keenly as I regretted it I found immediate action my only recourse to meet the difficulty and "keep afloat." Needless to say, such a state of affairs so soon after my departure was not altogether comforting, although I allowed it to disturb my peace of mind but little. It required but a short time, however, to realize the fact that this peculiarly interesting state of personal finance brooks no delay if it is to be honestly overcome, so I accordingly set myself the task—and an interesting one it was—of looking for employment in a strange town.

It is an exceptional place indeed, where one placed in this somewhat awkward predicament, cannot find in the columns of the daily papers the most attractive announcements in the shape of golden (edged) offers exactly calculated to meet the exigency of his own peculiar case, so that after scanning the morning papers I felt at times quite overwhelmed by the seductive inducements to forever shun the sphere of idleness, and enter the arena of a few and select spirits whose fortunes were undoubtedly assured the moment they decided to take the matter into their own hands. It required but a very short time, however, to effectually dissipate this illusion, and discover that the most attractive of these, for the unsuspecting applicant, augured in reality nothing more or less than a cheap advertisement for those who took this means of making known some aristocratic and im-

aginary want to a disinterested public: "WANTED—at once—A young man of good address, to manage office during agent's absence. Liberal salary, and share in business to the right party. Apply at No. 24 ——— Street between the hours of 10 and 11 a.m." This, or words to that effect, had for some days stared me in the face each time I looked through the "Want" columns of the morning papers. It seemed to me somewhat too flagrant, however, on its face—too much of a good thing in fact, to call for any serious notice, but after unsuccessfully offering my services in every other likely case, I finally resolved to call at the given address, and so satisfy myself beyond all doubt respecting the matter. . . . It was a wet morning when I started off, and on reaching the door of the office, I carefully laid my drenched umbrella aside, in deference to a natural desire I accorded the occupants on such a day to keep their floors dry, and entered. I found myself in a bare-looking room, with only a table in the centre by way of furniture, on which was littered a great profusion of important-looking documents and papers, and at which sat a gaudily dressed young man, smoking a vile cigar, and listlessly scanning the columns of a morning paper. I briefly explained the object of my call, and was offered a seat. After a few moments preliminary conversation, in which the young man cautiously endeavored to sound me in a general sort of way, and at the same time impress me with his own stupendous importance in the world of finance—though in what direction

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I failed to discern—he produced a large, awe-inspiring, gilt-edged form of a blank bond, as a sample of what he said he proposed floating in some mysterious manner amongst the farmers and others throughout the country. I cannot now recall the exact nature of the bond, but I remember that his proposition was so strangely repugnant and perfectly transparent as a piece of shallow fraud, that I could with difficulty refrain from advising the young man to abandon his project with all haste, hie him to a wood yard, and there learn the luxury of earning an honest living. At about this juncture another young man entered the office, airily puffing at a cigarette, and gracefully swinging an umbrella. He was introduced to me with all due dignity, as a partner in the “Agency,” and on hastily scanning him over my eye rested instinctively for a moment upon the umbrella he held so lightly in his hand. A second glance was sufficient to convince me that the Company into which I had thus fallen although refined perhaps as to taste in certain directions, was certainly not over scrupulous in indulging their fancy, for the umbrella which the young man held in his hand was none other than my own! I got up very quietly, without saying a word, opened the door, and looked for my umbrella, in the hope that my horrible suspicion might prove unfounded. But no! all doubt was at once dispelled, for where I had placed my umbrella on entering there now remained naught but a few drops of water to mark the spot from which it had so mysteriously vanished. Return-

ing to the office, I shut the door after me, and politely but very firmly demanded of the young man that he should hand over my umbrella without unnecessary loss of time, or suffer the consequences of my most righteous wrath. He higgled somewhat, however, and appeared loathe to part with it (it was a \$5 umbrella), but when he saw my undisguised determination to get it at any cost, and after carefully weighing his chances of success in a personal encounter (he was a puny, undersized individual), he reluctantly handed it over, and apologized for what he termed his "mistake." Needless to say I tarried no longer after finally securing my umbrella, and when I left the place it was with a feeling that I was just a little wiser than before I had first crossed the portal in quest of work.

I was by no means discouraged by this little incident in my effort to get work, and finally succeeded in getting employment in the office of a certain wholesale provision merchant as a clerk in his warehouse, where I remained for a space of three weeks, performing such duties as were assigned me in that capacity. Here I learnt the difference between "long" and "short" bacon, and the current prices of eggs, butter and lard, but I must confess I was somewhat disappointed at being obliged to take this step, for I had vaguely hoped to find some genial occupation in a sphere less confining, although in just what direction I could not at the time have said. I was desirous, however, of shunning all such sedentary work as far as possible, and so at the end of three weeks, somewhat sickened

with the business, and thoroughly disgusted with the greasy atmosphere of the warehouse, I resolved to look elsewhere for means of subsistence, and cast about with this end in view.

By this time I had come to realize in a very marked degree the fact that a stranger in a strange place, without means of livelihood, and in search of employment, is not greeted on all sides with that cordial feeling of friendly interest which might be expected to characterize the relations of one brother towards another. The watchword under such circumstances I soon discovered to be "Eustle," and although this was a source of but little comfort to me in my somewhat awkward predicament, I endeavored to grasp its meaning as best I could, and follow the unwritten law prescribed in such exigencies.

After looking the ground over again carefully—drifting about the while in a peculiar kind of style—I almost unknowingly found myself one day numbered amongst those pests of domestic felicity—a canvassing fiend, in the shape of a sewing machine agent. With a grip of circular matter, extolling the general superiority of my machines over all others, and with my brain taxed to its utmost with technical terms and information respecting the same, which I had at some trouble and expense carefully imbibed for the occasion, I sallied forth one fine morning in the direction of a neighboring town to commence operations in this my new sphere of commercial activity.

But in vain did I harangue every good housewife with

whom I came in contact. They either had a machine or did not want one, and my experience as a canvasser in this direction was a howling failure, and the commissions to be earned on my sales were still mistily floating with the birds through the hazy atmosphere. My mode of operation in this business was so simple, so straight to the point, and my goods so saleable withal, a sewing machine to my mind at this time being so entirely a necessary contrivance in every well-regulated household, that I madly attributed my failure to a most lamentable state of ignorance among women in general respecting their own requirements.

At every house whose appearance I took to indicate a sufficient state of material prosperity to warrant my approach, I blandly inquired, with an air of scrupulous nicety, for the "Lady" of the house, laying careful and refined emphasis upon the word "lady" wherever I detected the slightest susceptibility to that adulation peculiar to a certain class of homely bodies of rustic growth, or whenever an unusually comely mien presented itself at the door. I was generally encountered by the "lady" herself, who would at times listen with some degree of consideration to my earnest efforts to impress upon her the immediate importance of purchasing, on her own terms, an "A 1 oscillating, back action, self-threading" machine, but I would as often be obliged to suffer the humiliation of having the portal slammed violently in my face just as I was hopeful of having created a most favorable impression upon her ladyship. In both cases my failure was equally unquestionable, not to say

irritating, and murder itself would have been deemed the merest pastime with me after one of these fruitless harangues.

I withstood this defeat in my new line of action to the very limits of my carefully assumed meekness, but the sameness and monotony of each day's result, when figuring up the total sales column in my memorandum book, had the result at last of effectually effacing patience from off the list of my cardinal virtues, and I feelingly vowed that sewing machines would thereafter play no part in any future field of *my* operations, as far as I could control the situation. I voted the business a hollow mockery, retraced my steps towards Winnipeg, and resolved to push farther west as soon as possible.

I had now been in Winnipeg for about six weeks, and although I had during that time been favored with little or no success in my numerous efforts and projects, yet I rather liked the town than otherwise. The push and energy in the place, and the air of western freedom and frankness which seemed to permeate the manners and habits of the people, was somewhat novel and refreshing after the staid crispness which prevails to so large an extent in Eastern Canada. Situated as it is at the juncture of the two largest and most navigable rivers in the Canadian North West, surrounded on all sides by the greatest wheat-growing country in the world, and approached on all sides by rail, I thought it bid fair to become in time a really great and important city. The growth is slowly but

steadily increasing, and, aside from the immigration of the Old Land, there is a constant influx of population from Eastern Canada. Many of the latter, however, look hopefully forward to the time when they will have accumulated their "pile," and thus armed return to the enjoyment of their first loves, for be it remembered that Winnipeg is 1,500 miles and more from Eastern Canada, and is in so totally a different country in many respects that it might be six thousand miles away, and the difference would be no more marked. And there are, of course, besides, a great many converts in this respect; on whom fortune has smiled since their advent into the country, who would live in no other.

Situated across the river is the town or suburb of St. Boniface, the inhabitants of which are for the greater part of French origin. Impelled by curiosity and the remembrance of Whittier's well-known "Bells of St. Boniface," I sauntered over the bridge, crossing the Red River towards this suburb one evening, when I had the pleasure of hearing what is claimed to be the identical Bells of St. Boniface to which the great poet referred, peal forth their music from the belfry of the Roman Catholic chapel, summoning the faithful to enter :

"The bells of the Roman Mission,
That call from their turrets twain
To the boatman on the river,
To the hunter on the plair."

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II.

IT now being very plain to me that the City of Winnipeg offered no further inducements for my presence, I was intent upon pushing farther west, and accordingly shaped my plans in this direction as far as possible. An idea occurred to me at this juncture, to which I had heretofore given some thought, but with no very serious intention of carrying it out. I was acquainted with a number of young fellows in Toronto and elsewhere, who had come up into the country, and after remaining awhile had enlisted in the North-West Mounted Police, and while I had little or no information respecting this corps, and the individual life led in the ranks, my curiosity was sufficiently aroused to culminate in a determination on my part to enquire into the business with a view of "taking on." Having decided upon this course, I lost no time in setting to work, and making all possible enquiries respecting terms of enlistment, etc., which information I easily obtained, and which had the effect of still further strengthening my inclination in this direction. The prime qualification, I was informed, was physical fitness for the service, and before being furnished with transportation to Regina—the headquarters of the force—it was necessary to undergo a thorough examination at the hands of the authorized surgeon in Winni-

peg, and be pronounced by him sound. After weighing matters carefully in the balance, I finally decided to take the step forthwith, and with somewhat mingled feelings sought out the surgeon's office, where on arrival I found that gentleman in the act of examining two recruits for the same service, which, of course, rendered the operation somewhat easier so far as I was concerned.

A few moments sufficed for my examination from head to foot, and after being pronounced sound and fit, I went with my medical papers to the recruiting officer, where I was furnished with transportation to Regina in due form as a subject in the service of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen. This done, nothing remained for me now but to await the departure of the train westward bound.

I got together what few traps I possessed in convenient and compact shape, and turned up at the appointed hour, when I found my two friends, whom I had met undergoing their medical examination in the morning, also on hand and ready to leave. One was a great, tall fellow, who informed me that he had but a few months since completed his term of service in the English Life Guards: had come over to Canada in quest of some relatives whom he had been unsuccessful in finding, and, like a fish out of water, concluded to re-enlist in the Canadian service. He seemed highly elated over the prospect of again donning a red coat, and getting back to some extent on the old lines. The other recruit was a stylishly dressed young Eng-

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lishman, who had "been out" just a year, very short, stout and jovial. He had come up from Hamilton, Ont., where he had heard of the police, and where a life of chaotic uselessness had led to a suggestion on the part of his friends that he should decide upon "enlisting" without any unnecessary delay. He seemed thoroughly acquainted with the whole business, and was greatly elated at the prospect before him, which seemed the zenith of his ambition, as embodying a life of freedom and endless adventure on the open prairies entirely to his taste. He was very full of it, and could with difficulty repress his pleasure at so soon arriving at Regina. He had an extensive amount of luggage, several guns, and a fox terrier, and this, taken with his appearance and conversation, led me to think for a time that I was unmistakably on the right track in following the footsteps of such an individual, and offering myself for this service.

At the scheduled hour the train pulled slowly out, and it was with a feeling of no great regret that I bid adieu to the scene of my brief and bootless efforts of the past few weeks in Winnipeg. The ex-Life Guardsman was not long in exhibiting his qualities as an old soldier, and his elation soon assumed another form before we had travelled a great distance. It appeared he had several copious flasks of bad whiskey secreted about his person and in his valise, the result of which soon became painfully perceptible, first in a gradually increasing flow of innocent hilarity, followed by a state of maudlin inanity, and finally utter unconsciousness.

When he had succeeded in reaching this interesting state of abject helplessness we carefully stretched his weary form on a vacant seat in the rear of the smoking car, and, as a warrior, allowed him to enjoy his well-earned repose, while the young Englishman and myself whiled away the time as we bowled across the prairies, with cards and conversation. He was a jovial little fellow, and seemed surprised at what he deemed my ignorance in knowing so little about the police and the life in store for us. He informed me with an air of confidence that he had his programme all carefully mapped out, and that he was to be transferred to Banff in a very short time after arriving at Regina, having already, as he informed me, a thorough knowledge of foot drill, and being an experienced horseman. I inwardly felt that he was somewhat astray in his calculations on hearing him talk in this strain, but said nothing which might upset his sanguine expectations.

In travelling west from Winnipeg along the line of the C. P. Ry., I commenced to realize to some extent the scope and magnitude of the prairies, which are seen on all sides stretching away to the distant horizon in a manner which tends to make all objects on their surface, including the train itself as it glides along, of the utmost insignificance. The country as far west as Brandon is particularly fertile, the productiveness of the soil in wheat and other cereals being almost phenomenal.

I soon inferred that my newly found acquaintance was a young man of some little means, although

hardly sufficient to appease the patrician tastes and inclinations which he seemed to possess in so marked a degree. He was thoroughly sociable in his way, and his general make-up and little pot belly were peculiarly English. We finally turned in for the night at about 10.30, leaving our friend the Ex-Life Guardsman to the enjoyment of his somewhat troubled slumber in the rear of the smoking car.

For the first time since my departure from Toronto I now experienced some little anxiety as to what the morrow might have in store for me. As for poor Dashwood—such being the name I will call the little Englishman—he little dreamt of disappointment in the roseate picture he had made for himself as a member of the North-West Mounted Police, but fate, alas! had decreed it otherwise, as will be shown hereafter.



III.

WE arrived at Regina the following morning at 4.30 a.m., when I gathered together what little I possessed in the shape of luggage, alighted, and with somewhat mingled feelings watched the departure of the train until out of sight. Together with the ex-Life Guardsman—who had by this time recovered his equilibrium—and Dashwood, I strolled towards the town lying to the other side of the station, where we put up at one of the hotels and had our breakfast. Thus reinforced we sallied forth to scan the lay of the land for some sight of the police barracks, but there we were informed lay several miles distant from the town, and out of sight. After sauntering about for a short time we espied in the distance a tall, soldierly-looking fellow walking along the street, dressed in neatly fitting riding breeches, top boots, spurs, and a forage cap jauntily perched on one side of his head. Recognizing him as a Mounted Policemen, we quickly made for him and immediately commenced to ply him with innumerable questions peculiar to our position, as the result of which we were directed to the town station of the police, where he told us we had better report ourselves as newly arrived recruits. This we did, when our arrival was telephoned to the barracks, and a police team sent down to convey us out. This turned

up in a course of a few moments, when our luggage—principally Dashwood's—was thrown pell mell into the back of the waggon, and we started off at a brisk trot towards the barracks. Our driver, a policeman, was of a morose temperament, so that we were unable to gather much information from him as to things in general. He had evidently driven recruits under similar circumstances before, and had apparently come to the conclusion that a vain effort to explain things we were not capable of properly understanding was simply a waste of valuable time.

After travelling about a mile, what seemed a miniature city planted on the open prairies came into view, and odd horsemen here and there indicated our near approach to the police barracks. The sun was well up, and on our entrance into the barrack enclosure a busy and exhilarating scene was presented to our eyes. Squads of men, both mounted and on foot, were being sharply put through their drill and various manoeuvres,—smartly attired orderlies were hurrying to and fro—a lone sentry was doing his beat outside the guard-house,—officers were here and there to be seen and heard giving orders, in language sometimes more forcible than orthodox—and the whole scene was one calculated to impress upon me very strongly the fact that I was indeed a recruit in this line of business.

We were driven over to the barracks proper, where our luggage was thrown out of the waggon with little ceremony, and where we ourselves alighted. No

sooner had we touched the ground than a tall, powerfully-built individual, majestically sauntered up and enquired of us in a most patronizing manner as to whether we were recruits. I took upon myself the responsibility of informing him that such was the case, when he gruffly ordered us to get our stuff out of the way and await his return, after which he marched off in a most stately style. Enquiry of a passing policeman elicited the fact that he was the Regimental Sergeant-Major, and one who carried a world of weight about the place, so we accordingly lugged our stuff into one of the barrack rooms, and impatiently awaited the return of this very important dignitary in the new life upon which we were soon to enter.

The men at this time were all on duty of various kinds about the place, and we had an excellent opportunity for a time of surveying our surroundings at leisure, pending the return of that august and already repugnant personage, the Regimental-Sergeant-Major. The rooms in the barracks we discovered to be large and airy, and in each one were ranged on all sides small cots, about three feet broad by six in length, on all of which were folded blankets in uniform style. At the head of each cot was a shelf, on which the owner's name and rank appeared on a small piece of cardboard, and on which his kit was all carefully laid out in systematic folds. In the centre of each room was a bare-looking table on which were two lamps, and under each table were two huge wooden receptacles clumsily posing as aspirants for the proud title of

spitoons. The floors were scrupulously clean, and in one corner were ranged half a dozen buckets of water labelled "Fire." Cleanliness on all sides was apparent at a glance.

After waiting around for about half an hour, the Sergeant-Major again put in his appearance, and in the same patronizing style, which I had before remarked in his manner, ordered us to accompany him to the Adjutant's office. Here our papers were produced in due form, carefully scrutinized, and filed away. The Adjutant—an old British soldier—received us in a very affable manner, but the formalities of greeting being soon set aside, he at once began questioning us in the plainest possible terms, as to where we had come from, our former occupation, and numerous other little matters personal to ourselves, which we succeeded in answering to his apparent satisfaction. He then led us aside and traced out on a map for our information and enlightenment the lines of the police patrols in the Territories, at the same time regaling us in an off-hand manner, with a little lecture on the duties of policemen in general: the importance in particular of implicit obedience at all times, and laying careful emphasis upon the dire and certain consequences resulting from any other line of conduct. When he had finished his discourse we were handed over to the tender care of the Sergeant-Major again, who informed us that we would next be brought before the head surgeon that afternoon for medical examination, and if passed by him would be sworn in on the following day in due form.

He then marched us over to his own quarters, and presented us each with two pairs of blankets, when he instructed his orderly to take us over and assign us rooms in the barracks. This done, we were directed where we might procure a pair of trestles and three boards—which constitute the regulation police cot—and to be on hand sharply at three p.m. that afternoon for our final medical examination at the hospital.

It being now about twelve o'clock, the men were trooping into their rooms off duty, and to say that they were a loud and hilarious lot after their morning's restraint expresses it but mildly. Pipes—those great consolers in all humors and at all times of the night and day—were immediately drawn out and filled, and when once under way, the general talk waxed loud and furious; the early prospect of dinner apparently lending a cadence to the conversation which it might otherwise have lacked.

Seated in the room to which I had been assigned, amidst this rabble about me, and still in my civilian clothes, it is not astonishing that I should have felt somewhat strange and bewildered as yet in such company. I assumed as becoming a front as possible under the circumstances, however, and offered a few mild and inoffensive remarks in a general way regarding my new surroundings, but little or no heed was accorded my presence. I concluded it best, therefore, to subside within myself as far as possible, or at least until better acquainted with my new position, and so subject myself as little as possible to the contempt with

which raw recruits are generally regarded by the older hands. I proceeded to set up my cot in a corner, reflecting the while on the crudeness of its component parts as compared with the most uninviting couch on which it has ever been my misfortune to seek repose, and attempted to fold my blankets in a manner as nearly like the others as possible. In this, however, I failed after repeated attempts, and much to the amusement of those about me, it being not altogether an artless trick ; when I enquired in as civil a tone as I could command the proper method to pursue in the matter. In response, I was again reminded of the isolation of my position as yet amongst mounted policemen by being politely informed that "I would d—— soon learn the trick before I had been there many days," and so did the best I could unaided.

A bugle was now sounded in the barrack square, and had an almost electric effect in raising the spirits of all hands present to a most jubilant pitch of hungry expectation. I was somewhat mystified at so speedy a transformation of mien and temperament amongst the men at the mere sound of a bugle, and ventured to enquire respecting its apparently wonderful significance. "That means ' grub pile ' that does," said a ravenous-looking individual of whom I made the enquiry. "Why, you don't seem to know nothin', you don't. Why, man, yer dinner'l be ready inside of ten minutes, and there's plum duff to-day—PLUM DUFF, d'yer hear? Don't know what plum duff is, eh? Well, just wait till you tackle it. Its been known to kill out-

right, and suicide sometimes follows, but when yer once get your digestive organs well toned, its simply grand it is, and no mistake."

Ten minutes later another bugle call was sounded, at which everyone made a wild scramble for the mess-room door, and not wishing to unnecessarily assert myself after the few unprovoked snubs I had already received, I leisurely followed in the rear of the crowd. After a few moments of impatient waiting, the doors were finally thrown open by the cook, which was the signal for a mad rush through to the other side of the room. Here was a table, on which rested a great pile of plates, and on one side a rough counter, behind which a brawny individual, with sleeves rolled up, was, with the aid of a huge butcher's knife, rapidly slashing chunks off a huge roast of beef and slapping them on the galvanized iron plates as they were held out by each man to receive his daily ration. There being naught but to follow the example set me in the matter, I managed to procure a plate after several ineffectual efforts, and, holding it forth as the others, received a huge triangular chunk of burnt meat as my reward. With my well-earned trophy I now walked proudly towards the tables in the centre of the room, on which were huge pots of steaming potatoes, and after some squabbling and explanation as to who and what I was, I managed to secure a seat on one of the benches, and forthwith commenced an onslaught upon my dinner. It was certainly plain and rough fare—in fact the plainest and roughest I think I had ever sat down to—

but one possesses great powers of conformity at times, and in this instance, by the aid of a rather keen appetite, I really managed fairly well. I felt greatly relieved when the ceremony was over, however, for in a manner I felt considerable restraint at this my first meal amongst my new and as yet untried companions. But in this respect, however, I might well have spared my feelings, for my presence was utterly ignored, and their only object and ambition seemed concentrated in getting enough to eat regardless of all consequences, and least of all the more ordinary forms of table etiquette.

Dinner over, I had nothing to do but await the appointed hour for my examination by the surgeon. At three o'clock Dashwood, the ex-Life Guardsman, and myself were marched off to his quarters in the hospital, where we were examined again from head to foot, in every joint and in every muscle of our anatomy, and again pronounced sound. Dashwood's weight, and the size of his corporation told against him somewhat, but he was finally pronounced fit, although a trifle fat. This operation over, we were informed that we would on the following morning be duly sworn in and provided with our kit, and in the meantime we occupied ourselves with observing as far as possible our new surroundings, and taking in as much of the situation as came within the reach of our observation.

I met several fellows whom I had previously known in Toronto and elsewhere, who were profuse in their questions respecting matters generally in the outside

world from which we had lately come, and of their friends and acquaintances in eastern Canada, until I found myself at my wits' end for a time to satisfy their eager curiosity.

We lounged about until supper time, watching the various squads at drill, and the numerous other phases of barrack life around us. At supper the same manoeuvres were gone through as at dinner. This meal consisted of tea, cold beef and dry bread, and, judged by the lightning, off-hand way in which everything eatable in sight disappeared, I concluded that North-West Mounted Police and wholesome appetites were closely allied in each and every individual identified with the force. In the evening I looked in for a while at the canteen, where four per cent. beer was being quaffed in copious draughts, and a piano on a raised platform at one end of the room was performing yeoman service at the hands of a husky policeman. This, together with the tables, around each of which were seated four or five individuals, went to make up a most jovial-looking scene. An occasional song was sung, and lustily encored, dice were rattling upon the table, the tobacco smoke was dense, and all seemed perfectly happy. Four per cent. beer, I might here mention, is a mysterious mixture peculiar to the North-West, and particularly dear to all North-West Mounted Policemen. It is a concoction propounded by some ingenious individual for the purpose of evading the stringency of the liquor laws which prevail throughout the North-West Territories, but to all intents and

purposes its effects are very similar to those produced by the pure article. At 9.30 p.m. the canteen was closed, when all hands returned to their rooms in the barracks, and at 10 o'clock roll was called by the orderly. At 10.15 the bugle sounded "lights out," when all except those detailed for night duty were expected to be in their beds.

With the temporary blankets with which I had been provided, and with my clothes for a pillow I managed to worry through this, my first night, in a particularly uncomfortable style. One of the trestles on which I had laid the boards turned out to be several inches shorter than the other, and balanced itself but very improperly under my weight, and in turning over at one time in quest of a softer side to the uncharitably hard boards, it quivered somewhat ominously for a second, and then precipitated me at length upon the floor, to the great amusement of those about me. I gathered myself together in short order, however, and finally succeeded in getting the bed placed in a reasonably safe position, when I once more laid me down to court that sleep wherein my troubles might for a space be forgotten.

And thus was ushered in my first night of barrack life as a North-West Mounted Policeman.

IV.

I awoke in the morning stiff and sore, at the sound of the bugle blowing "reveille" in the barrack square in a manner calculated to penetrate the ears of the most drowsy. Twenty minutes were allowed in which to dress, make up the cots, sweep the floor, and otherwise put things generally into ship-shape order. The bugle then sounded "fall in" for stables, at which all hands, armed with curry combs and brushes, fell into line outside the barracks, answered their names to roll-call, and were marched off in fours to the scene of action. Being unprovided as yet with my kit I did not attend this parade, which I may here remark mustered out in the same manner every morning at six o'clock and were marched off to the stables, where cleaning, grooming and feeding were carried on for a space of an hour and a half; there being some 200 horses in the stables at Regina to be looked after. Breakfast was served at a quarter to eight, when the remains of the previous day's dinner was made do service in the shape of hash, or "Mystery," as it was commonly called, together with dry bread and coffee. It was crude fare on which to commence the day, and one which only thoroughly hungry men could relish or appreciate. For myself the smell of that "Mystery" for the first time gave rise to reflections of a

somewhat nauseous nature, it being a conglomeration of meat, grease and potatoes, to which I had not as yet become altogether inured, and which necessitated an entire forgetfulness on my part of all epicurean tendencies that called for no mean effort before it became with me, as with the older hands, a mess fit for the gods.

At ten o'clock, Dashwood, the ex-Life Guardsman and myself were taken to the orderly room, and with considerable ceremony were sworn in as members of the North-West Mounted Police, after which we were taken to the Quartermaster's store, where we were issued with our kit, consisting of riding breeches, boots, serge tunic, helmet, forage cap, stable clothes, socks, under flannel, and numerous other little articles of wearing apparel, as well as a razor, carbine, cartridge-belt, revolver and ammunition. On the whole it was a most complete and superior kit. That evening in the mess room our names were read out in general orders, with regimental numbers attached, as having been only taken on the strength of the force, and posted to "Depot" Division, and for the following day's detail Dashwood and myself, along with another man, were read out for duty as "Mess Fatigue."

Well, I was now a full fledged policeman, with power to arrest, make seizures, shoot, and even kill if needs be! The thought I confess was a little bewildering. ME a policeman! Who could have foretold such a pass? Not I to be sure. Surely, I thought, it must be but some strange hallucination, the result of

a disordered and morbid imagination,—or perhaps the plum duff of the previous day. But if not a policeman what then? And so the reality of my position gradually dawned upon me. Yes, to be sure I was now a policeman, and that name which as a small boy I had held in such mortal dread and terror was now applied to none other than myself: whereupon I fell to moralizing upon the vicissitudes of human life anyway!

Dashwood and I were as yet ignorant of what this "Mess Fatigue" meant, but we were made painfully aware of it on the following morning in a manner we did not soon forget. I passed my second night in barracks a little more comfortably than the first, having filled my mattress and paliasse with hay from the corral, and after endeavoring to fold my blankets in the regulation fashion, I fell in with the rest of the men the next morning, and at the sound of my name answered "here," with the utmost confidence in my position. I was then bluntly ordered to the mess room, where I found my friend Dashwood decked out in his canvas suit of stable clothes, which I myself had now donned for the first time. Of a truth, dress does greatly transform a man, be he high or low. In this respect I could only judge of myself by scrutinizing Dashwood, but a glance was sufficient to convince me from what a height had I fallen. From a respectably-dressed fellow—at least I had considered myself such—I had now come to be one whose appearance would hardly have been accepted as altogether "au fait" in the most refined so-

ciety in the world. Canvas pants—cheap and ill-fitting at that—a jacket with brass buttons, and a fore-and-after cap of the same rough material, while no doubt entirely suitable for the occasion, did not go to make up a costume such as one would deliberately don to ensure those effects most pleasing in the sight of an Oscar Wilde, or even any of the more humble and insignificant members of that school of sweet fancy. Dashwood looked me over carefully from head to foot. I returned the compliment, and our eyes met. A momentary smile suffused his rotund, jolly little face, immediately followed by an irrepressible roar of laughter. It was really too much. The figure I cut in my stable clothes for the first time, as did he in his, was something from which we recovered only after repeated and uproarious rounds of laughter.

The other man detailed for this duty was also on hand, and smiled upon us in a very patronizing and irritable kind of style at what he apparently considered our simplicity and greenness. He lost no time, however, in informing us respecting the nature of our new duty, which he succeeded in making us understand in all its repugnant details with but little trouble or repetition. First of all we had to prepare the tables for breakfast, distributing the knives and forks, replenishing salt and pepper boxes, cutting bread, and, aside from the actual cooking itself, get everything in readiness for breakfast. This was no light task for two such greenhorns as Dashwood and myself, but by the time the bugle sounded "breakfast" we had suc-

ceeded in getting everything into proper shape. During breakfast continual and frantic cries for more bread kept us busy slicing loaves into wholesome chunks, until the perspiration rolled in large drops down our faces, in our endeavors to keep up with the constant and ever-increasing demand in this direction. Finally, and with a sigh of relief, we watched the members gradually thinning, until the last man had left the mess room, and the meal was at last declared over.

And now began our work in earnest. One hundred and seventy-five hungry wolves had greased and made filthy one hundred and seventy-five plates and as many knives, forks and cups, to say nothing of the tables and benches, which were in equally as dirty and greasy a condition, and when we were calmly informed that our next work was to wash and thoroughly dry each greasy plate, knife, fork and cup, as well as thoroughly scrub the floor, benches and tables, it can be readily understood when I say that we felt none too elated over the prospect. Dashwood was in fact a little chop-fallen over the matter, for he had hardly anticipated anything of this nature, although I myself was not taken altogether by surprise.

We were pensively surveying the havoc created at breakfast, and the filthy condition of things generally which we were to remedy before the next meal, when the husky voice of our friend the Sergeant-Major, who had poked his head into the mess room on his daily morning rounds, thundered in upon us in well-rounded terms, as he shouted: "Now then, m' lads, to

work, and don't stand there as though you didn't know what you had to do." Dashwood offered some parley at this, for it was plain to see he had not been accustomed to any dictation heretofore respecting what he should and what he should not do, but he was effectually squelched in very short order by that brawny individual, and much as we disliked it we inwardly felt that there was nothing for us but to proceed with the work we had in hand without further cavil or question. We first gathered the plates together, after removing the remains of breakfast from off their surface, and then the knives, forks and cups, throwing all into a huge sink provided for the purpose, and into which we afterwards poured several tubs of boiling water. We then proceeded to sweep the mess off the floor, tables and benches, after which, in obedience to instructions previously received, we armed ourselves with scrubbing brushes, and with a reckless feeling towards things generally at having to descend to this sort of work, commenced operations.

Dashwood swore madly, and thought some mistake had surely been made in assigning him to such work, when I suggested that I thought he was fully aware before taking the step and enlisting of all that it entailed. This, however, only had the effect of making him swear more vigorously, and he put his whole heart into unholy expletives in a manner which revealed a versatility in this direction that was both profuse and intricate. He appealed to the cook, and wanted to know whether he was a North-West

Mounted Policeman, or a common floor-scrubber. The cook calmly informed him, with an air of biting sarcasm, that he guessed he was a floor-scrubber, pure and simple, and advised him, as he valued his future peace of mind, to carry out the work he had in hand without further kicking, and, as far as possible, as though he were to the custom born. He perceptibly squirmed at this, but finally took the advice after some little hesitation, though with but little grace, and again we went at it, scrubbing everything in sight, until in our desperation we thought we had done enough scrubbing for ten years to come, as far as that mess room was concerned. We then got at the knives, forks, and dishes, picking them out of the sink one by one, drying each thoroughly, and vigorously rubbing them all with brick-dust. Our work of cleaning up over, we regarded each other with a sigh of unspeakable relief, and sat down on the side of the sink to enjoy a few minutes' well-earned repose from our labors. Scarcely were we seated, however, when the voice of the cook, penetrating through a cloud of steam, grated harshly upon our ears, as he called: "Say, you fellows, don't you see what time it is? If you don't get those tables ready for dinner in mighty quick order it will go hard with you if Bobby (meaning the Sergt.-Major) comes around." Again Dashwood and I looked at each other. We kept silence, however, for our indignities had already called for a full and complete expression of our resentment so far as mere words were concerned. Recalling the cook's ad-

vice, however, we languidly gathered ourselves together, and proceeded to get the tables in order again for dinner, distributing knives, forks, and cups for all hands, carrying out dirty water, and getting things generally in shape for the reception of our unwelcome guests again at 12.30. The bugle sounding the arrival of the ever welcome hour was the signal for another mad rush at the door, such as I had witnessed the day before. The cook cautiously pulled the lock aside and swung open the doors, when the mob immediately burst inside, and scrambled for their rations in the manner I have already described. We calmly watched them devouring their dinner, but our apprehension seemed only to increase the rapidity with which things again became besmeared with grease and filth, and we turned away in disgust at the remembrance of our morning's work, which we now saw was soon to be repeated. The mess created was, if anything, greater than at breakfast.

This meal over, we proceeded as before, gathering up the plates, knives, forks and cups, and were soon lost in our duties again as washers and scrubbers. We doggedly worked through the afternoon, fervidly praying the while that time might take the wings of morning and land us quickly at the end of our disagreeable job. The dishes and all were again cleaned, and the tables set as before, when the bugle announced supper, and for the third and last time that day we performed our part as scullions.

It was 8.30 p.m. when we had put the finishing

stroke upon our work, and went out to drink in the fresh air after our day's confinement at work, which we had both unanimously agreed upon as entirely unsuited to our former tastes and expectations as Mounted Policemen. Just what Dashwood's feelings were I was unable to quite discern, for he was morose and uncommunicative. I inferred that his disgust was too heartfelt to find expression in idle words, and his disposition for the time favored silence on my part.

And so ended my first day's experience as a North-West Mounted Policeman. It augured little, I thought, for the wild and thrilling adventures which Dashwood had depicted in such glowing colors to me as the lot of mounted policemen, but I was a little loath as yet to form conclusions.



V.

WE were up the following morning at the sound of reveille, when with the others I marched to the stables with brush and comb, where, after helping in the general clean-out, I was assigned a horse to water, feed and groom. I knew little or nothing of horses in general at this time, my knowledge of the noble animal having been principally gained by observation on the front platform of a bob-tailed street car. I had, of course, occasionally driven a horse, but beyond that, I had had little or nothing to do with them whatever. But now, however, I was to undergo the interesting operation of learning by experience and close contact something of their management, both in the stall and out.

I was curiously eyed by an officer as I began grooming my horse in the way I considered most proper from my scant knowledge, blowing and puffing the while after the fashion of the proverbial groom, in order to dispel any doubts that might exist as to my extensive experience in this business, but in a few moments I was thoroughly convinced by that gentleman that what I didn't know about properly grooming a horse was sufficient to class me amongst the most verdant of individuals in this respect. I worried through the stable hour, peculiarly conscious of my ignorance as to the proper care of horseflesh after the few hints I had

now received, and felt not a little relieved when the business was over, and my first attendance at stables in the police was a thing of the past.

Stables were attended at Regina three times daily, when the same process was gone through each time, so that I became after a while capable of grooming a horse in the regulation fashion, and with more satisfactory results than had at first rewarded my efforts in this direction.

Being a recruit in a very proper sense of the term as regards drilling, I was of course assigned to a squad composed of men whose knowledge in this direction was about on a par with my own. There were about twelve or fifteen of us all told, and we were each day drilled for an hour on foot and another hour on horse-back, and, as might be expected, were a source of considerable amusement not only to the older hands who happened at times to watch our crude endeavors, but to ourselves as well, in noting the ludicrous figure often cut by one of our number. More especially was this the case in mounted drill, when various peculiarities were exposed in our attempts at uniformity of movement which were highly amusing at times.

In mounted drill we were first paraded in the riding school, to where each man led his horse after first bridling and saddling him in the stables. This school was a large and spacious building, on the floor of which was strewn hay to the depth of about six inches, as a safeguard against accidents, in the shape of

tumbles and tosses. Our saddles were of the universal pattern, without stirrups, and the horses with which we were provided were of the broncho-breed,—a combination which inspired no great degree of confidence in those of us whose equestrian propensities had heretofore lain dormant, only to be aroused now in the rude manner which is here adopted in imparting a knowledge of this peculiar accomplishment. Our Drill Sergeant was a magnificent rider himself, but individually we received but little attention at his hands, as he stood in the centre of the riding school with a long-reaching circus whip, which he would energetically snap at the heels of any horse inclined to lag in our trots about the school. After all had mounted in the fashion he would first illustrate by springing upon the back of his own horse in two precise movements, we were for sometime walked quietly about the school prior to receiving an order to trot, and in the meantime were instructed as to the manner of properly holding ourselves in the saddle, and various other matters respecting horsemanship generally were explained at length for our enlightenment. I felt myself tolerably secure at first, as we walked our horses quietly about, but as all things must have their beginning, our turn came at length, and our Sergeant in a stentorian voice, gave out the command to "Trot," at which each horse, apparently quite familiar with its significance, broke into a brisk trot.

Without stirrups, and never having ridden before, the ignorant confidence I had commenced to feel in

my ability to retain my seat was now most severely shaken, as I was tossed first to one side and then to the other. As is invariably the case, I instinctively twined my legs about the horse's belly with all the energy I could command, in my frantic efforts to keep my seat, but this only tended to increase the briskness of his gait, and make my position every moment more insecure. The riding-master generally took the lead in these trots, and set the pace, which he would unfeelingly continue in its briskness until the strain under which we were all laboring would finally result in first one and then another rolling off on our backs with a dull thud upon the soft floor. I was one of the first to go down in this way, and even poor Dashwood, despite his vaunted experience as a horseman, found the "stripped saddles" little to his liking, being obliged to abandon his jockey style and adhere strictly to instructions for riding as a policeman, allowing the horse to pitch him fairly, and finding his balance as best he could. For a novice this method is no easy task, and there were but one or two who did not find the soft floor of the riding school infinitely preferable to the continual pounding which this style of riding involves, and it required a number of lessons before I began to feel the slightest confidence in myself to keep fairly astride my horse.

Our rides were each day more severe and exacting as to our general bearing in the saddle, and the carrying out in detail of all instructions given us. For nearly four weeks we were daily put through this

mounted drill on "stripped saddles," and at the end of this time it was considered that most of us had succeeded in acquiring something of a "seat." We all had our tumbles and tosses on ground that was soft and otherwise, but none of us had so far received any injury of a serious nature. Many of us had become so sore and chafed, however, from the continual pounding, that it often required the greatest effort, intermixed with most delightful spasms of acute sensibility in the regions round about the affected parts, to drag one leg after another, and a sitting posture, needless to say, was for a time scrupulously avoided as far as possible. In fact, so bad did some of us become in this respect that we felt obliged on more than one occasion to seek the sympathy and advice of the surgeon, but under penalty of arrest we were finally told to go near him no more on such a pretext, but to ride until we had worn our soreness off. This I found a trifle galling, to say the least, when, in compliance with this advice I discovered that my saddle on a number of occasions was dyed a deep vermillion with my own blood. I was assured, however, that this was the only way in which to become properly toughened, and so worried through our rides on many occasions when the agony was almost unbearable. But this complaint, I was snappishly informed, was but "trifling," and altogether unworthy of notice. Oh! how I longed at times to have that surgeon and riding master seated astride a saddle perforated with

sharply pointed tacks, or other instruments of equally nice torture, and make them pound it for the space of an hour or so, just to show them how "trifling" I considered my complaint, no one but myself knew.



VI.

FROM the stripped saddles we were transferred to those of the California pattern—the regulation police saddle—and were now given stirrups of the Mexican pattern, and for the first time donned our jack spurs. After the stripped saddles which we had been using, these California saddles were a great boon, and to feel our feet in stirrups was another blessing which all heartily approved and appreciated. We were cautioned, however, not to lose sight of the fact that we had now a pair of formidable-looking spurs upon our boots, and that any thoughtless or promiscuous use of them might result disastrously. This was more forcibly pointed out by the fact that there were even then several men confined in the hospital as a result of injudicious use having been made of their spurs upon some hot-blooded broncho. We were very guarded, therefore, in this respect, but it was not until after a few exhibitions of a broncho's ability to kick and make himself generally obnoxious, that we fully realized the importance of exercising every care in this direction.

After we had had sufficient practice with the use of our spurs, or rather how to keep them at a safe distance from our horses' sides, we were brought out of the school into the open again, where the uneven nature of the ground detracted not a little from the comfort we had at

first experienced in these California saddles on the smooth and soft surface of the enclosure.

A somewhat amusing incident took place the first day we were riding on the prairies with spurs, and in these California saddles. A man named Pike, a great, tall, ungainly fellow, was riding a magnificent black broncho, but which, unfortunately for him, was possessed of a somewhat fiendish temper, and which took every possible occasion of exhibiting its wild and pristine tendencies, regardless of any one who might be upon his back. Pike was somewhat insecure in his seat as yet, but was generally a very cautious man with his horse. While walking our horses quietly along, a thoughtless moment stole o'er him, however, and he carelessly allowed his spurs to graze the horse's sides, when the devil in the animal instantly came out of him like a thunderbolt. In almost a twinkling he was dancing in true circus style upon his hind legs, gave two or three wild buck leaps into the air, delivered himself of a loud snort of rage, and started wildly over the prairies. Pike, of course, had twined his legs about the horse's belly at this entirely unlooked for exhibition, and, despite the injunctions which were hurled after him by the riding master to keep his heels well out, his spurs were as firmly set in the horse's sides, as though a grim determination to bring them together in the centre was the sole and absorbing object he had in view. We watched the horse and man until out of sight, and a wilder and more thoroughly uncontrollable animal it would have been impossible to picture. A couple of

the men were sent after him, and it was only after two or three hours of a most exciting chase that they returned, leading the horse, whose sides were badly cut, while Pike himself limped painfully along in the rear, for it was impossible to induce him to mount again for love or money. There are occasions when sombre silence often explains much more than mere words can express, and so we judged Pike's experience, to himself at all events, to have been thrilling and interesting beyond all expression. He had only the day before endeavored to impress upon me the fact that this identical broncho was gifted with a most excellent, not to say noble, temperament, and I took occasion that night as I met him limping about the barracks to remark, "Pike, old boy, I suppose the good qualities of that broncho have rather sunk out of sight in your estimation now?" A sickly smile simmered about the corners of his mouth for a moment in response to this somewhat sarcastic salutation, and he went limping along, a most woeful spectacle of a man made wiser, though a great deal sadder, by a little bitter experience.

Dashwood's greatest trouble in these mounted drills was to conform with the style of riding adopted by the police, namely, the military "pound," which had the effect after a time of very materially reducing his weight. As before mentioned, he was decidedly fat when I first met him, but the wear and tear of the life was fast telling a most woeful tale upon his little pot belly. The high living to which he had heretofore been accustomed formed no part of his daily life

now, and the poor fellow was positively becoming haggard in his general appearance.

After having acquired some expertness in retaining our seats in the saddle, our daily rides became less irksome than formerly, and in foot drill also we were fast becoming proficient. From the third or lowest squad we had reached No. 1, and were now on the high road to dismissal. Three times a week all hands were mustered out for the Commissioner's parade, and we of No. 1 squad were now included in this very important turn out, and put through our movements in company order, both mounted and on foot, under the command of that very important personage himself. Woe to the man whose appearance and general equipment on these occasions were not strictly in accord with perfect regimental neatness, for any such were most mercilessly pulled over the coals in a manner that was not soon to be forgotten by the unwary in this direction.

Sunday morning Church Parades were even more exacting than the Commissioner's, in regard to personal appearance, and for these an almost endless amount of cleaning and brushing up was necessary. The occasion, however, was always the signal for more odium and heartfelt curses being heaped upon things in general than any spiritual good that was ever derived from the service, so far as I could discover. Church Parades and Regimental Day Guards were the two most heartily detested forms of a policeman's duty, and every man took a keen delight in

going out of his way, if necessary, to denounce them with all his heart and soul. Especially is the latter a policeman's "bete noir."

A day guard mounted at 2 p.m., and remained on duty twenty-four hours, and consisted of a corporal or sergeant and three men. The beats were divided into eight hours each, or two on and four off for each man, not including the non-com. in charge. Scrupulous care was necessary to be taken in our appearance, and from our boots to the tip of our helmet-spikes, all had to be in a state of perfect cleanliness and order. When I mustered out on this duty for the first time, it was with freshly pipeelayed helmet, spotless boots, highly burnished spurs, and buttons which glistened in the sunlight. I had cleaned and rubbed the night before until almost black in the face, and thought my appearance calculated to satisfy the most fastidious exactions. On this score, however, I soon discovered my mistake, for on holding my carbine at the "port" for inspection it was no sooner looked into than I was told I might consider myself "under arrest" for parading with dirty firearms. Now, I had cleaned that carbine, as I thought, until an improvement was absolutely impossible, and on being told that its condition was filthy and disgraceful, my impulse lay very strongly in the direction of informing the gentleman inspecting that he labored under a grave misapprehension; to say the least of it. I did attempt to lodge a mild protest, but no sooner opened my mouth than I was severely given to understand that as I valued my peace of mind I had

better preserve strict silence, and offer no parley or excuse of any kind. I discovered afterwards, that in my haste to get out in time, I had grabbed up a carbine from the rack which, unfortunately, had not been touched or cleaned for months, and left my own, which I had so carefully cleaned the night before, standing where I had then placed it. I endeavored to explain this the following morning when paraded in the orderly room, on a charge of having committed a breach of discipline, in that I did parade with dirty firearms, but my explanation availed me nothing. The fine fund was apparently low, and \$2.00 was duly docketed from off my month's pay on the score of "stupidity."

The duties of these day guards are the most tiresome and monotonous that could well be imposed upon any recruit. At the end of my first two hours' beat, in the hot sun, I was particularly ready to indulge in a perfect relapse from the strain by the aid of all possible accessories to bodily ease and comfort, but on entering the guard-house this desire was shown to have been carefully anticipated, and as carefully made impossible of gratification by the utter lack of any means in this direction, it being part of the duty, even though not actually on guard yourself, to keep the mind and body always alert, in case of any possible emergency. Benches and tables comprised all the furniture of which the room boasted, and lounging in any shape or form was an offence of the gravest character. Although perhaps quite proper that this should be the case, I confess that I lacked sufficient military or

other ardor myself to feel anything but absolute discomfort at such surroundings, and the four hours between the beats only served to make the business more intensely wearisome and disagreeable.

Under no circumstances were we allowed to leave the guard room during the twenty-four hours. Our meals were brought from the messroom, and not a stitch of clothing was removed during the whole of this time, which in itself rendered the situation rather undesirable than otherwise.

These day guards I believe are more or less the same in military life the world over, and I have little doubt but what they are as universally detested as in the North-West Mounted Police. Their usefulness in the police is largely restricted to imparting some little knowledge of military life, and not to the slightest necessity which exists for keeping them up,

I did a number of them while at Regina, in various kinds of weather, and did "sentry go" at all hours out of the twenty-four, but failed to discover one redeeming feature in the whole business, aside from the possibility of their usefulness in case of any unforeseen emergency, and the remoteness of any thing of the kind only served to augment and emphasize the personally uncomfortable nature of the duty.

VII.

DRILLING, it will be seen, occupied but about two hours and a half of our time each day, the remainder being fully taken up with all sorts and kinds of work—known as “fatigues.” When nearly two hundred men are living together in this manner, with any serious pretence at maintaining a state of cleanliness and order, the amount of work necessary to this end is something enormous, and each man must contribute a full and unstinted share. There were duties regularly set apart each day for this purpose, the performance of which was absolutely necessary, as well as work of a miscellaneous character about the barracks at which we were often put, much more as a matter of principle than of necessity.

Three men were each day detailed as “stable orderlies,” whose duty it was to look after the stables and horses. These went on duty at 5.30 each morning, and remained on until seven at night. With the number of horses always on hand and the amount of mess, such as only a broncho can create, this was no easy task, the floors and stalls having to be kept in a state of perpetual cleanliness, which required an almost incessant as well as skilful manipulation of the brooms. There were also the nose bags which required filling three times a day with a proper measure of oats, and hung up at the end of each stall, and numerous other

little details in connection with the strict care of the horses which is always exercised, made the day at this work a particularly busy one. The stables were visited two or three times each day by the Orderly Officer and a Veterinary Surgeon, when any evidence which indicated the slightest lack of diligence in our work was made tell against us in a manner that had the effect of making us particularly anxious about having everything in a perfect state of order and cleanliness at all times. Otherwise we were liable to come under that much abused alternative, "arrest for neglect of duty," with a consequent fine, and even imprisonment in the guard house was not of uncommon occurrence for any very flagrant neglect. Such being the case, it can be readily understood how in this, as in other matters, no small degree of diligence was at all times exercised in the pursuit of our work.

Then there was the Mess Fatigue, the nature of which I have already described in my experience with Dashwood, and for which three men were also detailed each day. Aside from these there were general fatigues each day, and during the time I spent at Regina there were few things at which I did not turn my hands, from hoeing potatoes to scrubbing floors.

It was the sergeant-major's duty each day to detail men for all work which he considered necessary to be done about the barracks, and to tell off the number of men for each separate part. On several occasions I formed one of a party, who, armed with brooms and sacks, were sent about the neighboring country to beat

out prairie fires, which threatened life and property, and right interesting work this was. It often required 15 or 20 men so armed, and the most strenuous beating, before the progress of these fires was stopped, and it was a highly blackened and disordered appearance we generally presented on our return to barracks after these fights with fire. I participated in several, and can vouch for it that the amusement is by no means exhilarating, but it is part of a Mounted Policeman's duty to respond to all such calls for aid in this direction, and while it added diversity at times to the daily routine, it required but a few minutes at the work to effectually wear off what little novelty the situation at first possessed; more especially if the fire happened to be in long, or thick and dry grass, when any unnecessary display of ardor or lack of care was apt to result in a scorching not soon to be forgotten by the unfortunate victim.

Another fatigue at which I worked the greater part of four days lives vividly in my memory. The soil in a section of the country about Regina is of rather an odd character, its sticky adhesiveness being almost phenomenal. Its color is of a muddy hue, and its comparative weight is abnormal. Times innumerable it has been unmistakably demonstrated that trees planted in this soil will wither and die in nine cases out of ten, and yet it is wonderful with what persistency some people will butt against the inevitable in the hope of getting satisfactory results. Orders were received one morning from the Commissioner to set

men at work digging 100 holes for some shade trees which he proposed having planted about the barrack square. Four men in charge of a sergeant were detailed for this work, of which number I formed one, and after carefully measuring off the ground, it was decided that the holes should be four feet deep by three in width. Armed with an antiquated and much abused shovel, which had long since outlived all its more aggressive qualities, I do not think I will ever forget my first encounter with this sticky soil. With a most grim determination and frantic digging it took nearly an hour before I had succeeded in making my first hole of the prescribed dimensions. Had I been offered my choice at the time between demolishing a stone fortress single-handed, or digging tree-holes in this soil, I would eagerly have embraced the opportunity of attempting to knock down the stone wall, and would, moreover, have considered any other choice most ill-advised. There was something about it which I firmly believe would cause the most stony-hearted director of penitentiary labor extant to shed tears of pity were he to behold his most hated enemy consigned to the task of digging 100 tree holes in its surface.

Some men were always fortunate in being assigned to work in these general fatigues of a less disagreeable nature than others, but for my part I seemed always in the thick of it, and if any particularly uncongenial jobs were on the tapis I seldom escaped being roped in.

Saturday was general cleaning-up day about the barracks, when the floors of every room were vigorously scrubbed, the windows washed, and things generally underwent a thorough and complete overhauling. It was general inspection day as well, when that high and mighty individual, the Commissioner, donned the regalia of his lofty office and personally went the rounds. With the aid of one or two of his officers, the general condition of things was minutely scrutinized in a manner which left no nook or corner unseen. Not the slightest discrepancy passed unnoticed under his practised eye, and all offenders against order and cleanliness were quickly singled out, placed under the ban of arrest, and made answer the charge on the following Monday in the orderly room. Various degrees of punishment were then meted out, sometimes in accordance with the offence, and sometimes otherwise, just as the humor of those in authority happened to be susceptible or not of considering any explanation which might be offered on the defence.

Orderly room parades took place each day at ten a.m., when all offenders against law and order, as understood and practised by the North-West Mounted Police, were made answer whatever charges might be laid against them, in a manner austere and formal. Fines were the most frequently inflicted forms of punishment, and they ranged all the way from one dollar to a month's pay. By this means it sometimes occurred to me as a little strange that this branch of the public service should not have been much more largely self-

supporting than is shown to be the case in the annual statement of expenditure on this account, but the "fine fund" was a sink-hole, surrounded by an impenetrable halo of mystery which it was the privilege of only those high up in the service to know anything about. Confinement in the guard house was also inflicted in the more serious cases, when the proverbial parti-colored suit was donned for a space, and the offender put at sawing wood, or some other equally galling occupation, under the escort of some former companion in arms. I escaped anything of this kind myself, although it was not an uncommon occurrence to behold some companion of the previous day bloom forth in this peculiar uniform, and join the ranks of the wood-hewers for a time. The thought of occupying such a position was by no means elevating, as every effort was put forth to render the duration vile as abhorrent as possible for any unfortunate enough to land themselves in such an unsavory position, yet I was assured by some of those who had experienced the thralldom that the change of routine was not without its novelty.

There were some peculiar cases in this direction which it was difficult to comprehend. One man I remember well, an Irishman named McRoyster, who was constantly being incarcerated for some trivial offence, and seemed rather to like it than otherwise. He was always rebelling against his superior officers, with no apparent reason whatever, and would as often be sentenced to a stay in the guard-house, which he would

receive with perfect complaisance,—with a broad grin would don the prison garb, and resume work again at the wood-pile in a manner that was not a little amusing. The humiliation of such a position was often pointed out to him in the strongest possible language, but of a nature contrary-wise—being an Irishman, as I have said—he seemed perfectly contented with passing his days in this style, and as the wood-pile was large he was, of course, always welcome to devote as much time to it as he pleased. In this sphere he seemed much more successful than as a policeman, and always maintained that he had made the mistake of his life in enlisting in the force. He was a well-educated young fellow, of a most congenial and light-hearted nature, but this peculiar trait in his character was altogether unaccountable, and the wood-pile became known at length as “McRoyster’s Hobby.”



VIII.

THE amount of care given to the horses in the North-West Mounted Police makes any sickness amongst them almost unknown, and they are as sound and serviceable a lot as one could well wish to see. They are all of the broncho breed, and thoroughly adapted to prairie work; an eastern horse being of very little value in this country. The average daily patrol of a Mounted Policeman on outpost duty is seldom less than 30 miles, and very often considerably exceeds this, and in a country where gopher holes abound to so large an extent the chances with an eastern horse are that he would travel but a short distance before coming to grief. There are several ranchers about the country who breed almost solely for the police, and a broncho is seldom broken before he joins the ranks.

I have seen on different occasions in Toronto and elsewhere, Wild West Shows, and exhibitions of rough riding and the "bucking" broncho, but what I had the pleasure of seeing while at Regina, when a brood of thirty bronchos were for the first time broken to the saddle, is something which so immeasurably surpasses anything I had ever seen before in this respect that the spectacle almost beggars my description. I will endeavor to explain the operation, however, as best I can.

The brood which I mention had been driven together in a small corral, and the first step consisted of lasooing them one by one, as wanted; it being impossible otherwise to get closer than within 20 or 30 feet of them. The man who had charge of the brood was a half-breed scout in the employ of the Government, and a rough rider of long experience and undoubted skill. The broncho after feeling the rope securely fastened about his legs or neck, as the case might be, would come to an abrupt standstill, and with uplifted ears, and quivering in every limb with suppressed agitation, would gaze wildly at the man holding the other end of the rope. At each step the man would advance, the horse, on perceiving his object, would pull hurriedly back, and it was a long and tedious operation before he finally reached his side and was able to touch the animal at all. Having accomplished this much, he would then lead him about for a time, taking what liberties he dared with him in order to lessen his fright as much as possible at so close a proximity with man, until the animal would after a time follow him with some little degree of confidence. Next followed the operation of getting a saddle upon his back. A blanket was first of all thrown over his eyes and strapped in position, and then one foot was pulled up under him by means of a rope, and securely fastened in position under his belly, in order to prevent his moving about to any great extent. Thus deprived of his sight and the use of his legs, the saddle was now cautiously placed upon his

back, the girth with some difficulty tightened up, and the bridle after a vigorous struggle was placed upon his head with bit in position. And then followed the fight between man and horse. The half-breed would spring upon his back, the blanket be drawn from before his eyes, and his leg released. The first movement on the part of the broncho after finding himself thus encumbered, was to shake himself—after the fashion of a dog coming out of the water—expecting in this manner to rid himself of the burden upon his back. Finding himself unsuccessful in this, however, he would then attempt to roll, but a vigorous touch from well-pointed spurs would bring him sharply to attention. He would then remain passive for a few seconds, and then wildly toss and twist his head in a vain effort to shake off the bridle. With his head hanging between his fore legs he would then remain standing motionless in that position for about half a minute, as though in deep and anxious thought, his eyes shining the while like fire, and his whole frame quivering with nervous excitement. Then, as a sleepy dog is often seen to stretch himself, placing his fore legs in front and bending its back like a bow, so did the horse, but it was a preparation on his part for a wild leap in the air, which would immediately follow, accompanied by a loud indescribable snort or scream of rage. The suddenness and velocity of these leaps was sufficient to unseat any but a born horseman. The half-breed was immovable. The animal after these leaps in the air would land upon the ground with his four feet so

bunched that a square foot would have contained them all, but no sooner would he touch the ground than in a twinkling the operation was repeated with equal vigor and energy.

The half-breed remained upon his back during the this frenzy of bucking, as though part of the animal, and seemed to experience not the slightest discomfort or anxiety through it all. The broncho would continue his "bucking" without the slightest intermission for a space of about ten minutes, and then with a mad kick and snort, and his head hanging between his legs, would rush off in a wild chase over the prairies, stopping occasionally only to indulge himself in a spell of vigorous and earnest kicking, after which, with a few wild buck leaps in the air, he would rush off again as though driven by a hundred demons. These antics he would continue with perfect equanimity of purpose without the slightest intermission for nearly two hours when, cut and bleeding at the mouth and sides, and in some cases absolutely blind for a time with his own rage and madness, he was about ready to abandon the fight. The saddle and bridle were then removed, and the horse turned loose again in the corral. It was the fight of his life, and he had been conquered, and it now required but a few more rides of this kind to render him available for usefulness, when he was regimentially numbered, and taken on the strength of the force with all due form and ceremony. Each animal underwent the same experience at the hands of this man, and it was truly wonderful with what skill and

nerve each horse was finally made to acknowledge his complete mastery. Wild west exhibitions of rough riding and the bucking broncho, where it is only by the aid of pistols discharged under the animal's nose that they can be made to indulge their peculiarity in this direction at all, are, as I have stated, of a nature far too tame to bear any comparison with the genuine and voluntary bucking of a yet unbroken broncho.

And now a word respecting the half-breed who had charge of this work. Louis was a man of middle age, of powerful though not commanding physique, and gifted with the cunning of a fox. Born and brought up on the prairies, he was certainly one of the most useful adjuncts of the police in his capacity as scout. In his earlier days it was said he had been well known as a daring and extensive whiskey smuggler, plying his trade between Montana and the Canadian territories; but when the police came into the country his services were listed as a Government scout, and since then his accurate knowledge of the country has been of the most valuable assistance on more than one occasion. Some years ago this man and a couple of policemen were detailed to overhaul a notorious horse thief who was reported as having crossed the line from Montana with a herd of 150 stolen horses. Under the guidance of Louis, the man was "held up," tried, and sentenced to 10 years in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. He was commonly known throughout the country as "Slim Jim," and it is related how, after sentence was passed upon him, he delivered a short speech replete

with typical western phraseology, in which he informed the "Jedge" that he had industriously followed his calling as a "loss thief" from childhood up, and had always calculated to take his chances as such, but to be held up by a former "pal," and one who had been the "slickest" man, as he termed him, in his line of business in the country, was almost more than he could stand, and while he took the sentence very much as a matter of course the thought that Cobell had anything to do with his arrest was a bitter pill for "Slim Jim" to swallow, and his faith in human nature became very much shattered in consequence.



IX.

THE canteen was a distinct feature of barrack life at Regina. Here was afforded a harmless safety valve each night for the pent-up grievances and complaints accumulated during the course of the day, and it was a poor policeman indeed who had not at his command a bundle of the most stirring wrongs to expatiate upon whenever opportunity was offered for so doing. If a man had some startling disclosure to lay bare, or some particularly important information to impart, it was always reserved until such time as he could gather his clique of friends about him in the canteen, when, with pipes lighted, and "schooners" of four per cent. beer flowing galore, he would unburden his soul of whatever tales of woe he might have to communicate to those about him. And there were besides others whose time was entirely given up to the unsavoury amusement of dice-shaking for the drinks, and whose capacity for imbibing "four per cent." seemed infinite. Of the latter class I remember well an Irishman named Casey, a short, thick-set man, with a perfect brogue, who laughed and talked louder, shook dice more persistently, and drank more "four per cent." than any other three or four men put together. Casey's voice—a husky bass—could be heard at regular intervals of about ten minutes above the din and roar of his surroundings, calling frantically for a

fresh supply of beer. When he had succeeded in getting away with eight or ten large-sized glasses, or "schooners," he was a perfect picture of that species of wild, untameable Irishmen, to whom fighting comes with as much grace as either sleeping or eating. At such times Casey was ready and anxious to fight everybody and anything that crossed his path, but fortunately he was generally taken in hand by some of his more intimate friends before his aching desire in this direction bore fruit, and led away to his room, to dream of the conquests he had failed to achieve in the arena of fisticuffs, and by means of quiet repose gather strength and energy for his appearance the following night.

A man who was ever known to sing a song, or against whom there lurked a latent suspicion that he might under any circumstances be capable of singing one, seldom escaped making his debut in this respect if he ever patronized the canteen to any extent. It mattered little what the song was, or in what language it was rendered, so long as it was an effort in the right direction. I remember very distinctly one evening when two newly-arrived recruits—one a short, merry-eyed little Frenchman, who had come all the way from Quebec to join "Le Police Monté," and the other a raw-boned, diffident farmer's lad from Ontario—walked timidly into the canteen to gaze upon the festive throng. Hardly had they crossed the portal when they were singled out and made the unwilling receptacles of all the four per-cent beer gratis they were capa-

ble of carrying about at one time under their waist-coats, when they were taken in hand, unceremoniously hoisted upon the platform, and a song demanded of each. They, of course, both stoutly maintained that the proposition was absurd, that neither could sing a note, and pitifully begged for their freedom. The crowd was mercilessly relentless, however, and there seemed absolutely no way out of it. Each must sing a song, it mattered not what. Finally, under such universal pressure their courage became sufficiently screwed up for the occasion, and the little Frenchman, taking the lead, sang the only song he was capable of remembering at the time, and rendered "La Marsellaise" with an enthusiasm so magnetic that the whole canteen was seen ringing with the chorus. *He* was honorably acquitted. And now came the young farmer's turn. He looked out upon the audience in that dazed, half-frightened manner peculiar to the average son of an honest rustic under such extraordinary conditions, and, after several long-drawn sighs and ineffectual efforts to clear his throat, he finally settled down to his work amidst the thunderous applause of those about him. I can only describe this "piece de resistance" as a rustic, barn-yard song, set to no air in particular, but rather embracing every tune extant. It was rendered in that quiet, confiding style of childish simplicity, interspersed with an occasional stop in the middle of a word to gasp for breath, that was really too funny for anything. The song was a story of a young man, who, in quest of adventure and a wider scope for his many

manly propensities than was contained within the bounds of his father's fields, had embarked as a sailor, and the song, or rather the chant, was a minute and detailed description of the thousand and one thrilling and adventurous hair-breadth escapes of the young man during his travels in almost every known land under the sun. Needless to say the number of verses in a song of so thrilling a nature was altogether a secondary consideration with the unknown author. He had apparently determined to dog the footsteps of that young man in his travels around the world with a description so accurate and minute that any feeling of constraint respecting the length of his song would soon become entirely obliterated in the keen interest felt for the hero of his story. And so the young farmer sang on and on for full half an hour, when his exhausted condition aroused the pity of some one who ventured to ask how many more verses there might be. "Twenty-five," he replied, "I've just finished seventy-five, but I'll stop now if you say so." There was some hesitation about this, however, for the men by this time had commenced to feel a little suspicious that they had been rather taken in by the rustic appearance of the youth, who they thought might have merely adopted this style in order to prevent the possibility of ever being called upon again for a song. The bugle then sounding in the barrack square decided the question, however, to the great relief of all concerned, and the poor fellow was excused from inflicting the remaining twenty-five verses upon an unappreciative

audience. Needless to say he was never called upon again, and in this respect was far more fortunate than the little Frenchman, whose song became looked upon after a time as one of the regular "stand-bys," to be given whenever the humor of the crowd might see fit to call upon him for it.



X.

IT is a general custom to keep a man at Regina for from three to six months, in order to ground and toughen him thoroughly in the various duties which generally befall a policeman's lot before transferring him for duty elsewhere. I was, therefore, not a little surprised, as well as delighted, upon hearing my name, along with some others, read out in orders one night in the mess room as having been transferred to Maple Creek, or "A" Division, where I was afterwards informed I was to go as Orderly Room Clerk, the man who had heretofore been filling the position having been called to Regina on other duty. I was particularly fortunate in this matter, for I had not as yet been at Regina quite three months.

It was with eager expectation therefore, that I awaited the day of my departure, and impatiently counted the hours before my release was at hand, for the life of a recruit in the N.W.M.P. is anything rather than a bed of roses. When the time arrived, my kit was all packed and in shape, and when we finally drove away from the barracks it was with an ardent hope that I might never live to undergo the recruiting process again. The duty had been unmistakably hard, and the place and arrangements generally but little to my liking. A man by the name of Dawson was transferred at the same time with me.

It was about 10 o'clock one raw, wet night when we drove down to the town station of the police, where we had orders to remain until 4.30 the following morning in order to catch the train westward bound passing through at that hour. Dawson's delight at being transferred was unbounded, and was manifested soon after our arrival in town in a most rampant kind of style. He lost no time in setting to work and industriously plying himself with bad whiskey, until his identity became so far lost to himself that his own name was something far too complicated for intelligent articulation. I lost track of him soon after midnight, but he was found wandering about the back streets at about three in the morning, in that wild yet entirely unconcerned style peculiar, as a common result, among those who endeavor to take aboard too much of the rank poison which is sold throughout the Territories in the absence of the pure article,—the universal relish for which may or may not be the result of living in a country where no trees grow, and where Indians prefer to eat dead horses rather than Government pork! Whatever the subtle cause, it cannot be denied that there certainly is an indescribable something in the atmosphere of the North-West which very often tends to lead men into habits anything rather than temperate.

But to return to Dawson, who had been brought into the station in the condition referred to: we deposited him gently in a corner on the floor to sleep off the effects of his somewhat too boisterous celebration, with naught but his serge for a pillow. The result of all

this was that when the train arrived in the morning Dawson was as yet unable to comprehend the situation, and despite our best efforts to arouse his muddled intellect, it pulled off without us. This left us in a sorry plight, to be sure, and our great concern now was that we might be ordered back to barracks, and our transfer cancelled. The sergeant in charge of the station was, in fact, strongly bent upon taking this course with us, but we finally prevailed upon him, after much earnest persuasion, to say nothing about it, and allow us to board a freight train then passing through, and get off in this manner.

Had I desired an opportunity of seeing the country along the line of railway for two or three hundred miles west of Regina, I doubt if I could have succeeded better than from the caboose of this freight train, which travelled at the rate of but 10 or 12 miles an hour the whole distance. The country loses its flatness a few miles west of Regina, and becomes gently undulating, and at this period of the year—towards the first of June—presented a most striking and beautiful appearance.

Maple Creek station was reached at about three o'clock the following morning, when we were directed by the station agent to one of the hotels in the place where we might pass the remainder of the night. Arriving at the house, however, we found the occupants all evidently sound asleep, although doors and windows were unbolted and wide open. Nothing loath, we marched in, in search of what hospitality the place might

offer, but despite our efforts to arouse somebody by tramping about the bare floors of the hotel in our heavy top-boots, we were unsuccessful, and were left altogether to our own resources in providing for our comfort, which we immediately proceeded to look after in the best way we knew how. Perceiving a dim light in one of the rooms at the far end of the house, we made for it, and found ourselves in the kitchen where pie making on an extensive scale had evidently been carried on the day before; the table and shelves being strewn with all kinds and shapes of pies, apparently calculated to tickle the palates of the more fastidious guests of the house, but at the expense, I fear, of any, whose digestive organs were not of the cast-iron type. Having been fed mainly on tough beef and potatoes during my stay at Regina, I concluded that a pie under the circumstances would be entirely in order, and Dawson promptly acquiesced in the proposition. We therefore proceeded forthwith to punish a couple of the cook's latest triumphs in pastry, and thus pacified, proceeded to make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the floor for the remainder of the night.

We had breakfast next morning in the hotel "International," after which we proceeded to the town station of the police, from where our arrival was reported by the constable in charge by telephone to the barracks, when a team was sent down to convey us out.

Maple Creek, so named after a few scrub maples which line the banks of a small creek running through this part of the country, is — miles west of Winnipeg,

and — west of Regina. Like all small western settlements, it boasts of three or four hotels, or, more properly speaking, saloons—the same number of stores, a couple of churches, and a few miscellaneous dwellings. The police barracks lie about two miles south of the town, and as we approached them in the waggon on our way out, presented a far more imposing aspect than the town itself, and the few trees, such as they were, and green foliage along the creek, was a welcome sight to feast the eyes upon after the almost perfect barrenness of the country surrounding Regina.

We reached the barracks in due course, and found them to be of smaller dimensions than those at Regina, Maple Creek, or, “A” Division of the N.W.M.P., being but 150 men strong, all told. This Division extends from Moose Jaw east to Medicine Hat west, and south to the International boundary at Montana. There are about twelve or fifteen out-posts or detachments, all told, at each of which are stationed from three to eight men. The remaining strength of the Division is kept at headquarters, so that we found on our arrival not quite forty men in all at the barracks.

We were soon assigned places in the barrack-rooms, and had our kits unpacked and placed away in regulation shape upon the shelves. The men at the time we arrived were mostly at work upon fatigues of various kinds about the place, similar in most respects to those which I have described at Regina.

No sooner had I got my kit carefully put away, and donned my fatigue clothes, than I was broached

by the orderly sergeant, who eyed me inquisitively for moment, and then told me I was "just the man he was after." I was subsequently sent over to the officer's quarters, where some general house-cleaning was going on, and where it transpired they were a few men short on the work. Now, I had hardly anticipated resuming work of this nature at Maple Creek, having been given to understand that I was transferred here solely for duty in the Superintendent's office as Orderly Room Clerk, but before I had time for any serious reflections respecting the matter I found myself situated at the wrong end of an intensely dirty chimney, and literally immersed in a cloud of soot and ashes which was continually pouring down as the man on the roof kept vigorously poking and scraping away with a long pole. In other words, I was initiated at this post as a chimney sweep, a job at which I worked for the greater part of two days. Needless to say I did not consider this a very auspicious ushering in of my new duties as an Orderly Room Clerk, but consoled myself as best I could by trying to think that I had probably been misinformed respecting the matter, and that I was to continue at what is termed "straight duty," or a little of every kind of work each day, such as I had been doing at Regina. I was next detailed for duty as stable orderly, which was about similar to that performed at Regina, excepting that I was by myself at the work; there being but one large stable and only 25 or 30 horses to look after. The following day I was assigned

some other duty, and so on each succeeding day, until I finally abandoned all hope of ever getting the position which I had been given to understand was the pretext under which I had been transferred from Regina.



XI.

TO my great satisfaction, I found that little or no drilling was done at Maple Creek, and no more of those horrible day guards, Sunday church parades and all that they entailed, were practised here. Discipline generally I found was not maintained at such a high concert pitch, and the relaxation was indeed a boon, although duty there was of various kinds and in abundance for each and every day of the week, not even excepting Sundays.

A guard house formed part of the establishment here as at Regina, in which were generally one or two outside individuals undergoing a sentence of a month or two, but a prisoner's escort was considered sufficient for all purposes here without the appendage of a regimental day guard.

I was detailed for duty as prisoner's escort on different occasions, but remember one day particularly when appointed escort over a poor unfortunate Russian lunatic, who had been picked up on the prairies a few days previously by one of the patrols, and brought into head-quarters, where he remained, pending his removal to the insane asylum at Winnipeg. He spoke a little broken English with great difficulty, and made use of it almost incessantly to harp upon some strange tale of jilted affections, in which he and some unknown and terrible woman were concerned. He was

in a most deplorable state generally, and being in a somewhat filthy condition bodily, I received instructions from the surgeon to bring him over to the hospital, turn the hose upon him, and have some medicine administered. This I did, but it was a most difficult operation, and it required the greatest amount of persuasion to induce him in either case that we were not seeking his life in cold blood. On perceiving our object as to making him thoroughly wash himself, he pitifully begged us to shoot him at once, or even cut his throat, if we preferred to accomplish our object with less noise, "but, oh! meister," he pleaded, "do not throw cold water on me." The poor fellow and cold water had apparently long since taken leave of one another, and the thought of now parting with the filth he had since that time managed to accumulate about his ragged person was an overwhelming source of agony to him.

Besides the one or two outsiders, or, as they were contemptuously dubbed, "civilians," generally confined in this guard house, an odd policeman or two were generally suffering the consequence of some little indiscretion in the shape of a month's confinement with hard labor. In fact the usefulness of these police guard houses throughout the territories would seem to be very much lessened were the poor policemen themselves not being continually made do penance therein for some trivial lapse in discipline. An occasional red man was also picked up about the prairies, suffering from an excessive use of the much loved "fire water,"

and made do penance in these guard houses by the aid of a monstrous pair of iron shackles about his ankles. I was never quite able to understand the necessity for this precaution, however, for the slightest display of any spirit or force in any direction whatever is almost entirely unknown among these Indians at the present day. The spirit of their ancestors has long since departed, and the civilization with which they have come in contact in late years has augmented their worthlessness to an extent that now makes "the best Indian a dead one."

After doing "straight duty" at Maple Creek for nearly four weeks, I was one day unexpectedly asked to relieve the clerk then on duty in the orderly room, who was going away for a few days on leave, and while here was asked if I would care to remain, my services up to this time having apparently given satisfaction to those in authority. Needless to say I readily accepted this offer of work so much more to my liking than the outside labor at which I had heretofore been employed, and was forthwith dubbed a "pen wiper."

There were two of us in the office, and the duties were about equally divided between us. The work assigned me consisted of making up the official reports of the division, weekly and monthly, entering up of the official diary, looking after the correspondence and general orders, besides numerous other little details of office routine and senseless red tape, peculiar to nearly all government departments, and to which the N.W.M.P. is no exception. Our office hours were from nine a.m.

until four in the afternoon, so that it will be seen we were by no means overwhelmed with work.

Attending stables twice a day and the care of the horses was a duty which none escaped, for without being in continual touch with horse-flesh, if only to groom and feed them each day, a mounted policeman doing barrack duty would soon forget what his calling really was. It is the regular and systematic care of the horses which is often all he has to remind him of what he really is in his loneliness out on these prairies for month after month, and in many cases year after year, in the same spot, when only the sight of an occasional train is all there is to remind him that cities and civilization are still extant, and that even prairies have their limit.

I believe the height of monotony, unless one is thoroughly and systematically employed, is the life led upon the prairies, and cases where men and women have gone completely out of their minds from the awful monotony of their surroundings are of constant and frequent occurrence. Especially is this the case with former inhabitants of cities and towns, and emigrants from the more populous districts of the old country. How one sighs for the sight of a tree, or other break in the ever monotonous outlook, can only be known to those who have passed any time in this country, and out on the prairies. Remove the possibility of human company, and place a man by himself on these plains, with a consciousness of his situation, and the chances are that hopeless lunacy will be the result in a very

short time, so dreadful is the sense of loneliness experienced under these conditions. It is of course not to be understood by this that I include Indians in my calculation, in this respect, for their feelings are altogether remote and distinct from those of a white man in almost every way.

There were a number of Indians about Maple Creek, of whom I saw considerable during the time I was stationed there. They were a miscellaneous crowd, mostly of the Neche tribe, and a more utterly useless and degraded lot of human beings it would be difficult to imagine. Their chief occupation consisted in gathering up buffalo bones about the prairies, and bringing them to stations along the line of railway, where they received from six to eight dollars per ton for them. Besides this, they also did a little business in selling buffalo horns, which they would scrape, polish, and put together in some ornamental shape, and sell at the station to tourists passing through for from fifty cents to two dollars, according to the degree of sympathy manifested on the part of the tourist towards these degenerate emblems of bygone romance. The proceeds of these sales generally went towards purchasing a new blanket, groceries, and, when possible, fire water, and tobacco. Beyond their traffic in these buffalo bones and horns, an Indian does absolutely nothing, or comes as near doing nothing as it is possible to imagine. He instinctively despises work of every kind, and abhors it with all his heart. I did see an Indian one day so far forget himself as to indulge for a while in a white

man's labor, in an attempt to saw some wood, but the effort was of short duration, and a dismal failure. He found it impossible to keep a blanket over his shoulders and successfully carry on the work at the same time, and so abandoned his task with a grunt of disgust.

There was a camp of some two or three hundred of these nondescript Indians about Maple Creek, whom it was impossible to induce to live upon the Reserves and undergo a course of training in agriculture or any other useful occupation. We used sometimes to pay a visit to their camp on Sundays for the purpose of observing their manner of living, but the filth and stench about many of their tepees prevented a very close examination in this respect. With the proceeds of their buffalo horns they occasionally purchase a chunk of meat, which they cut up into mince and allow to remain in the sun until thoroughly dry. This, together with tea and biscuits, will often form the nucleus of an old-time "pow-wow," but their principal means of subsistence was the refuse of the settlers and the police, and in this direction there was nothing too disgusting for their degraded tastes. In walking about their camp one might see sitting about on the ground and calmly smoking stone pipes, bucks, both old and young, and the dignified mien of an old buck so occupied, as he dreamily watched his squaw performing chores about the tent, was something inimitable.

A great many of these Indians were the proud possessors of ponies and Red river carts, which were used in their work of gathering up bones about the

prairies. A buck and his squaw generally travelled together on such expeditions, but it was the squaw who scouted about for the bones, while her noble lord would sit calmly watching her at work, with his feet dangling over the front of his cart, never once deigning to move a muscle or render the slightest assistance whatever. When they had filled their cart with as many bones as it was capable of carrying, the buck would seat himself on the top of the load, while his squaw would trudge wearily along behind on foot. And so it is in all their domestic and other relations, the buck forever looking on while his down-ridden spouse performs the labor, and with what dignified and supreme contentment they can fill this office, it was indeed awe-inspiring to behold.

An Indian court was of frequent occurrence in the police orderly room at Maple Creek. The grievances which were then aired through the medium of an interpreter were generally in connection with some horse transaction, or rather their small ponies, without which an Indian can never be regarded as having reached a state of prosperity or success in this life. And what ponies they were! Their height seldom exceeded 13 hands, and to any but an Indian their value would rank simply with old and decayed bones. To an Indian with a two-wheeled cart, however, and with whom time is an unknown factor, these ponies are valuable property, and hence the constant trouble which exists as to rightful ownerships. In airing their woes in this respect before the Police Superintendent, their

cases were generally heard more with a view of imparting some little knowledge of propriety, and the laws governing common possession, rather than with any desire to inflict punishment on the creatures for their unwanton shortcomings. There were sometimes as many as ten or twelve Indians assembled together at one time in the orderly room, to give evidence in a case where some misunderstanding had arisen in connection with the barter of one of their ponies between two bucks or squaws of the tribe. Seated in a row on benches in front of the Superintendent, their names were first of all transcribed on paper by way of opening up proceedings.

Now, an Indian name in English is always odd, and sometimes pretty, but if ever language belied its significance, it was certainly misapplied in a most horrible manner in many of the names possessed by these degenerate individuals when translated into the English tongue. Picture a hag of the most repugnant description, with long matted black hair, thick as rank prairie grass, dangling about her shoulders, with small hawk-like eyes, a daub of red paint on each cheek, and the appendage of a filthy blanket hanging about her decrepid person, bearing the pretty and sweet-sounding name of "Twinkling Star," "Dewy Morn," or "Butterfly!" Their taste in this direction, though highly commendable, could hardly have been considered in all cases as very aptly applied. Their cases generally consisted of some trade in ponies, in which part consideration, generally a blanket, was withheld by the

purchaser, whose action, for some strange reason, would be stoutly maintained by his clique of friends, while the other would bring his friends together for the purpose of exposing the fraud. The pony in the meantime would often have changed hands again in some mysterious manner, which would render the probing of the case and the gathering of connected and intelligent evidence a task which required no small degree of skilful handling. Once decided by the Superintendent, they would all doggedly accept the verdict as final, with a grunt of approval or otherwise, and shuffle out and away, until brought together again under similar circumstances.

A favorite beverage among these Indians—an outcome of their intense love for fire-water—is tea and tobacco, mixed and then boiled together. With this they will often hold a pow-wow of the most horrible description. The effects of its use can readily be imagined, but as tobacco amongst them is a forbidden article, they are prevented from holding these rîtes excepting at long intervals, for any very frequent use of such a mixture would most certainly extinguish the life in their miserable carcasses in very short order. As a matter of fact, however, and for the great benefit of all concerned, such a consummation would undoubtedly be a most welcome, not to say beneficial result, excepting, of course, to the Indians themselves, who have an unfortunate habit of clinging to this life with a tenacity that is not easily overcome by the more ordinary afflictions of humanity.

XII.

BARRACK life at Maple Creek was occasionally enlivened by some little entertainment which the men would get up, when the inhabitants of the town and surrounding country would be invited *ad libitum* to attend and share in the festivities. One memorable entertainment was given while I was stationed here in the shape of a grand picnic and ball. Each policeman out of his scanty pay had subscribed about five dollars towards the expenses of the occasion, and did all in his power to make it a grand success. A couple of men with horses were detailed to scour the country within a radius of 30 or 40 miles for boys and girls (especially the girls), and nothing was left undone to procure a large and fashionable gathering, and ensure everybody a good time. Every known delicacy about the country, from canned lobster to mince pies, was procured, and a fiddler from Regina was brought on to enliven the occasion and impart a proper *ton* to the proceedings. Swings were erected at the picnic grounds, and the barrack rooms were profusely decorated with flags and colored hangings, and made do service as a ball room. On arrival of the day, each policeman's uniform was in the perfection of order, and the invited came trooping in on horseback and by buckboard from all quarters. A

general holiday was declared, and fun ran fast and furious.

At noon all hands headed for the picnic grounds, which had been carefully chosen a couple of miles distant from the barracks, on the banks of the creek, where a patch of maples, had, in some unaccountable manner, grown to comparatively respectable proportions, and resembled those of the proverbial picnic grounds not a little. Two swings had been erected, a few rude seats constructed, and every possible preparation made to render the picnic a grand success. Thirty or forty souls were soon assembled on the grounds, and every effort was at once made to entertain the invited guests in that propitious style which only Mounted Policemen are capable of assuming when thus thrown in contact with the fair sex.

The swings were the principal source of amusement, and they were used right vigorously, each man struggling for a chance to swing his young lady next, and just a "trifle" higher than the one before him, until the buxom prairie belles were often in imminent peril of being swung completely over the top cross-beam by their ardent and excited escorts. This amusement was carried on with varied success for more than an hour, without any serious mishap of any kind, but, to tell the truth, we were all anxious for the time when we might parade our guests before the "grub pile" which had been provided for the occasion, and thus show the unbounded hospitality of our ideas in this direction. We had spared no pains in this respect

and for ourselves as well as the ladies, we were anxious that operations should commence without any unnecessary delay. And this desire on the part of policemen long fed on Government rations, and whose tastes for such delicacies as mince pies thrived only on the happy remembrance of the distant past, was the most natural thing in the world under the circumstances, and altogether quite pardonable. But while we were seriously contemplating an onslaught in this direction, a most dire calamity befell our gathering, and our fun became literally swamped in a most unexpected manner. In the midst of our jollification we had failed to notice the ominous appearance of the clouds overhead, which had become suddenly dark and lowering, and occasional drops of a most prodigious size, such as are only seen in the west, now began falling in a manner which foretold a deluge of a most uncomfortable nature for any on whom it might fall. This fact was soon realized by the ladies present, and every conveyance which had been used to bring them to the grounds was now hurriedly availed of by the damsels and their escorts and driven off at break-neck speed towards the barracks. About a dozen of us yet remained on the grounds, however, and our prospects for reaching the barracks in time to escape the storm were exceedingly slim. The trees afforded but little shelter, and the problem of how best to save the grub pile was a matter which gave us the greatest amount of concern and uneasiness. The clouds soon opened out, and a downpour immediately followed which would have done credit to an Australian drouth of long standing.

A simultaneous bolt was now made by all remaining hands for the grub, and the onslaught which followed on mince pies and the other delicacies provided for the occasion soon had its effect in making us utterly indifferent as to the weather and everything else. We were satisfied, for the time being at all events, and if the remainder was beyond salvation, well, it was certainly no fault of ours. In the pouring rain a dozen of us had manfully stood our ground, and conscious that we might never enjoy another pic-nic, saved what we could of the wreck before it became completely waterlogged. We were filled and satisfied, and walked away amidst the still continuing downpour, each with a half munched pie in his hands, and in a state of perfect happiness. We at all events had had a pic-nic of it, and so felt that we had to some extent fulfilled the intentions of the occasion, which the rest of the party in their hurry to get away had failed to do. They had returned to the barracks, however, in time to save themselves the drenching we had received, and now thoroughly enjoyed the spectacle of our return in the bedraggled condition which mud and water galore and a tramp of two miles over the prairies had the effect of producing in our appearance.

The pic-nic, except to those of us who had enjoyed what we considered its main feature, was not altogether a success. While some disappointment was felt at this, the main hopes of the day had been centred in the ball and evening's entertainment, and no pains had been spared to make the barracks as attractive as pos-



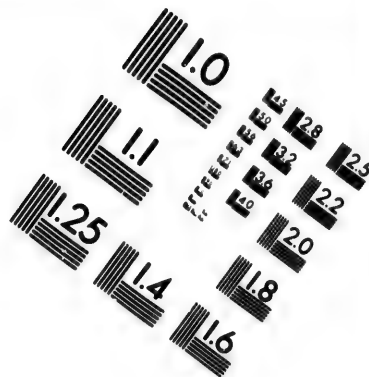
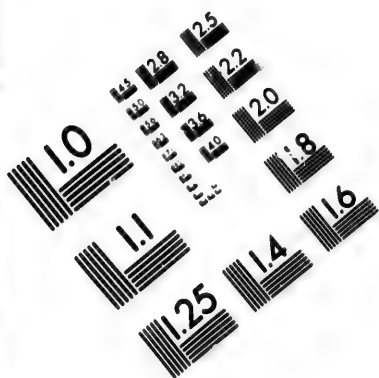
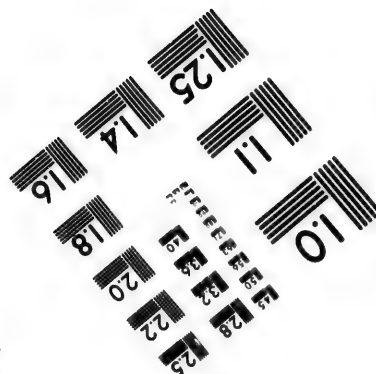
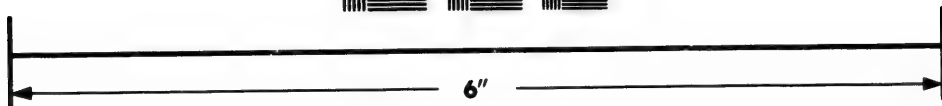
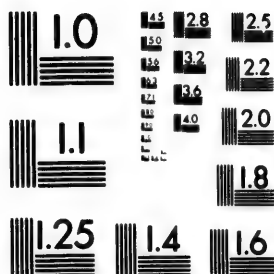


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sible for this purpose. The floors had been thickly waxed, a programme of dances carefully prepared, and a master of ceremonies appointed in the person of an energetic policeman, whose vocal organs were considered sufficiently robust to withstand the evening's racket. At seven o'clock the fiddler mounted his table at the end of the room, and vigorously scraped out the grand march (or at least what was intended for such), when all hands sailed in with a will that promised an evening of sustained merriment.

Now, a Mounted Policeman has two distinct sides to his nature. He is not only a Mounted Policeman, but he represents also his previous calling, or what he was before enlisting in the force, and viewed in this light, the gathering at this ball was of a most promiscuous character. An ex-sailor, but now a policeman, might be seen dancing at one time with the wife of some well-to-do rancher, and the next moment with his hired girl. The hired girl might be seen dancing a waltz or polka with an officer's batman, and then with the officer himself,—the rancher with the officer's wife, and then with the hired girl, and so on through all the various grades of what otherwise have been termed social caste, until the lowest had in this manner come in contact with the highest, and vice versa.

The fiddler scraped out his music on the top of the table, beating time the while with one foot,—the master of ceremonies, in a state of wild excitement, was ever heard above his surroundings, shouting out the order of procedure, and all went merry as a marriage

bell. Dance after dance was added to the original programme, and none seemed prone to call a halt. A supper had been provided in the mess-room, and the morning was fast dawning before the company finally dispersed and left the barracks in possession of naught but policemen again.

Did everyone thoroughly enjoy himself? The question was never asked or thought of for a moment. The master of ceremonies had a throat so swollen the next morning, that his breakfast was a painful task, and his voice was lowered to a husky and labored whisper. The fiddler complained of stiffness in his arms and shoulders, and every man of us had so drained the dregs of enjoyment from the occasion that we might have been the innocent objects of practice for a purring champion the whole night, and I doubt if we would have felt more demoralized.

Balls are rare occasions in the North-West Mounted Police, but once taken hold of, no lack of energy or spirit is displayed in bringing them to a successful issue, and for downright fun, as it is sometimes understood, I shall long remember this ball and picnic at Maple Creek.

I have referred to the various classes and conditions of mankind represented in the North-West Mounted Police, and in this respect the force was truly composed of a motley crowd. The ranks contained in fact no less a personage than a real live lord, and from that high estate to the very lowest there were speci-

mens of nearly all. At Maple Creek, and in the office with me, was a graduate of Oxford University, performing little duties of drudgery each day in an apparently perfectly contented manner, and as though the hall of some ancient college of that great seat of learning had never known his presence, or helped mould one inclination outside his present work. An ex-professor of modern languages in an Ontario University, was also a member of the division, as well as several students of law and medicine. In fact every known profession under the sun seemed more or less represented, barring of course the church, and for any such who had not entirely forgotten their golly precepts, I fear their lives would have been most unhappy, to express it mildly. Young Englishmen of high family were numerous, and from these lofty heights of social eminence the ranks descended to men of the lowest type. A more motley or mixed crowd in fact it would have been hard to find anywhere, and, as a study of human nature, there were some truly excellent subjects. Men continue to drop from their pedestals of earthly standing from day to day, and in many cases it is such places and pursuits as this that are steered for in their perplexity. The discipline of the force is no respecter of persons in this sense, however, and all were treated alike.

A couple of months after I had been stationed at Maple Creek my late friend Dashwood one day put in an appearance, having been transferred to "A" Division from Regina. He was an altogether different

fellow, however, from when I had last seen him, the work at Regina having very materially reduced the size of his corporation, and lent a most striking gauntness to his general appearance. The estimate he had formed of the Force before enlisting and after was something he disliked very much to have compared. Not that his convictions now were insincere in his general disgust of the whole business, but because he had so decidedly misconstrued the nature of the life in store for him as a member of the Force, and the natural reflection which I, as his previous confidante, now cast upon his judgment in the light of reliability, was a source of no comfort to him in his present predicament. As was his wont, however, he maintained silence on a point so distasteful, and now seemed perfectly resigned to anything that fate might have in store for him, for he seemed to have lost all ambition as well as any confidence in himself to promote his own welfare after having so blindly taken the step of enlisting in the N.W.M.P. Aside from this, however, he still maintained his good nature, and in his own peculiar style was as interesting as ever.



XIII.

I WAS on several occasions while at Maple Creek detailed as "off man" to accompany the ration team on its weekly expedition to the outposts or detachments, and in this way saw considerable of the country lying to the south of Maple Creek, as far as Montana. These trips involved two or three days, during which time we generally covered a distance of from 90 to 130 miles. Leaving in the morning at day-break with a four horse team, we would return the night following, or perhaps not until the next day; each detachment being supplied once a week with forage and rations in this way. The country through which we traversed was generally of an undulating character, and when the weather was not too hot they were not unpleasant trips to take. There was of course nothing whatever to see, and the only break in the monotonous landscape was an occasional pond or little lake nestling at the bottom of some coulee, like a lost diamond in the glistening sunlight. Nothing but a trail winding along ahead of us guided our course, and the hazy atmosphere and distant horizon were our only surroundings. An occasional coulee would now and then loom up before us a little larger than usual, and our eyes would instinctively rest upon it with a hungry stare of relief, and a hope that on reaching its top some fresh sight might greet our view. On

near approach, however, the undulation would become so gradual that its distant magnitude would become imperceptible, and again the eye would eagerly scan the horizon for some object on which to rest, only to behold another coulee or wavy undulation the same as the former in the far distance. How utterly small and puny one feels upon first travelling a wilderness like this, can only be known to those who have experienced a long over-land journey of this kind. One seems on reflection—if one is given to reflection—to dwindle and congest until it is possible in a measure to realize how a mind at all morbid can soon recede into that state of blankness which is madness. One must bring himself up occasionally with a sharp turn in such wanderings, and earnestly cultivate an unconsciousness of his surroundings, by application in some manner to the details of his personality, if he is to avoid this calamity, for otherwise it is an almost certain result, and, as I have said, is of frequent occurrence.

For ranching purposes the country south of Maple Creek is insurpassable, and this business is extensively carried on. For general cultivation, however, the land is unsuitable, and cannot, as a rule, be worked to advantage. The Sir Lester Kay Company, an English concern, which sank large fortunes in their attempts to carry on wheat-raising on a large scale in this part of the North-West, conclusively proved that it was a failure, and are now turning their attention in the direction of stock-raising, with very good results.

Evenings off duty at Maple Creek were very prone

to drag along in rather tiresome style, and barrack life generally was on the whole monotonous and uneventful. Occasional entertainments were given in the town, to which a few of the men were sometimes invited, but the most memorable day, aside from that on which our picnic and ball took place, was the 1st of July. Dominion Day certainly lost none of its significance in having fallen upon the settlement about Maple Creek. On arrival of this holiday, the inhabitants of the town and surrounding country assumed their gayest attire, and indulged in horse racing, in that wild easy style peculiar to small western settlements. Every man who owned a horse possessing the slightest claim to respectability duly entered him for the races, and on bare back, or with buck board, knocked what "go" he possessed out of him in a wholesome and forcible manner. Every scheduled race had from five to ten starters, and was run with a wildness and vigor that might have involved life or death, instead of a bag of flour or potatoes, or some other equally tangible trophy.

There are some characters in this western country to whom no more horrible insult can be offered, or one less likely to be passed by unheeded, than to insinuate that there might possibly be something in connection with a horse of which they are ignorant. Ignorance in all other respects they will freely acknowledge, if need be, but in the matter of horseflesh they will brook no questioning. And to a great extent their knowledge in this respect, although not based on scientific research, is genuine, for there are many

prairie bred men whose lives are passed for the greater part on horseback, and who certainly know and understand their horses and horseflesh generally far better than anything or anyone else. There is also just enough tinge of the old-time roughness and lawlessness left in many parts of the West to lend no little interest to an observer of present day life; there being, of course, many men who lived in the country long before police protection—when six-shooters were the only means of persuasion, and who still retain this spirit to an extent that makes them even now “bad men” with whom to deal, excepting in a very cautious manner.

The cow boy or cow puncher of the present day, of whom I saw not a little at odd times, are still a wild and reckless lot, who care little or nothing for common law or order. They are, of course, perfectly at home in the saddle, where they are seen to best advantage at a round-up. Here their skill as cow punchers shines forth in a truly artistic manner. As visitors to a town after pay-day, however, one can generally view them with a greater degree of safety and comfort at some little distance, for they are highly disagreeable characters with whom to deal when bad whiskey, or “Montana red eye,” as it is termed, has been sufficiently imbibed to arouse their ambitious propensities.

These round-ups take place in the spring and fall of each year, when the cattle which have been ranging at large over the prairies, are all brought together and

re-branded by their respective owners. To get them together for the purpose, is a task which often involves weeks of hard riding and scouting, and the branding of them is as difficult as well as an interesting operation. Strength and nerve in abundance are necessary in successfully carrying it out, and it requires a cowboy of no mean skill to "floor" an animal, and keep him grounded until the branding iron has been applied. This done they are again turned loose to wander at their own sweet will over the prairies, and feed upon grass where they can find it thickest and most to their liking.

I cannot conclude these short sketches of life in the North-West Mounted Police with a feeling of having done this matter justice without attempting to briefly outline one or two of those characters of which Maple Creek boasted, and who, to a certain extent, imparted a distinct color or shade to the sphere of life in which fickle fortune had located them:—

"Paunchy," the Baker, the Patriarch of the Division, was a certain policeman with ten years of service in the force at his back. He had been born in a baker's shop, had baked pretty much all over this continent, and had finally baked himself; as it were, into the ranks of the police. He was a man on the wrong side of fifty, of medium height and somewhat indefinite proportions, and with a look of chronic mournfulness depicted in his face, that might have indicated a life into which more than one man's share of sorrow had crept.

He had remained single all his life; his simple nature never having risked incurring the responsibility incumbent upon a state of matrimony, although it was hinted at times that "Paunchy" in a mournfully quiet but very effective way was becoming unusually attentive to the commanding officer's cook. Just what his intentions or designs were in this direction, however, no one could quite decipher. Paunchy had lived too long to take into his confidence the younger fry about him, and maintained a discreet silence regarding himself and his affairs generally. Paunchy's dog, a cross between a coyotte and a coule, was his principal companion. The dog's name, strange to say, was Paunchy also, and this often led to heated discussions among the men as to whether the dog was named after him, or he after the dog. Some were cruel enough to maintain the latter to be the case, whereupon Paunchy the Baker would give vent to his ire in a most rampant and surprising style for one of so mournful a mien. Paunchy had been young once, and had knocked about the world not a little in his younger days, but his extensive experience, sad to relate, had been mostly confined to bake shops. Paunchy and the bake shop were synonymous terms. One was incomplete without the other. Paunchy outside the bakery was a fish out of water. The bakery without Paunchy was no bakery.

Such a man was our baker. A simple, kindly old fellow, harmless as a kitten, and always going about his business in a slow, steady fashion peculiar to himself.

Everyone knew "Ned," the man on whom small pox had some years since left the marks of its ravage. Ned was the commanding officer's teamster, and what he didn't know about handling the ribbons and keeping his horses in tip top condition, as well as his harness and vehicles as bright as a new dollar, there was no man living could teach him. Ned never had much to say about it, however, but he knew his business perfectly just the same. The "Old man," as he termed the commanding officer, liked Ned, and Ned liked the commanding officer, and his existence in consequence was of rather a smooth and unruffled nature. He occasionally sought solace in a bottle of whiskey, when it transpired that Ned was a fighter of no mean merit, but the best of men will do that at times.

I never looked at "Fatty," the commanding officer's batman, but a smile got the better of me. In appearance, he was to my mind an excellent counterpart of Dickens' fat boy in *Pickwick Papers*. What "Fatty" didn't know about shining a pair of top boots, burnishing spurs, or packing the C. O.'s kit, like Ned, no one could teach him. "Fatty's" boyish face rather belied him, however, for in years he was on the wrong side of 30, and the proverbial equanimity of fat contentment with which such faces as his are invariably suffused became clouded o'er at times with a most rampant and stammering outburst of righteous rage when things didn't go exactly right in "Fatty's" sight. At all other times, however, he was the personification of perfect and apparently unruffled good humor. "Fatty" weighed 220 pounds stripped.

"Paddy" was the bugler at Maple Creek. Strange as it may seem for one bearing a name which invariably indicates Hibernian extraction, Paddy was a Frenchman, and a Parisian at that. He was an odd little runt of a fellow, with a most aristocratic mould of countenance, and, as might be expected, was at all times as cocky as a bantam rooster. To watch him walking across the barrack square was to wonder how so much self importance could be contained in so small a compass. But "Paddy's" conceit was not altogether empty. Small as he was in stature, it was a mistake to suppose—again likening him to a bantam rooster—that he was afraid to tackle anything from his own size to a full-grown turkey cock. "Paddy" had been known to whip some pretty big men, too, and to this fact he took frequent occasion to refer, in his own peculiar style, and with undisguised feelings, of the greatest satisfaction, which went to swell "Paddy's" pride not a little.

In presenting the foregoing outline of a brief individual experience in the ranks of the North-West Mounted Police, it is impossible to convey anything like a correct or adequate idea as to the general character of the force itself and the nature of the work it performs, and for this reason it may be as well to enumerate a few of the more important duties of Mounted Policeman. From the nature of the service it can be readily understood how numerous and distinct these must be. In fact, the experience of no two men in the force can be said to be quite alike excepting, perhaps,

that part which comes under the head of recruiting.

Of the numerous duties for which Mounted Policeman may be called upon to perform, there may be mentioned those men who are stationed along the line of railway from Manitoba as far west as the Rocky Mountains, for the purpose of searching trains for liquor and smuggled goods. In most cases these men also perform the duties of town constables in the places where they are stationed. Then again there is a detachment of men located at Emerson, Manitoba, who perform the duties of Customs' officials at that point, as well as town constables. During the summer another detachment does duty on Lake Winnipeg, and for this service the ranks of the police are seldom without some experienced ex-sailors, who are available for this purpose.

The primary duty of the police, however, is to maintain order amongst the Indians, suppress illegal liquor traffic, and guard the interests of the settlers throughout the Territories, and for this purpose a regular and extensive system of patrols exists throughout Assiniboia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Southern Manitoba. The hardiest men are chosen for this work, for the rides are often long and hard, and life in a log shack on the prairies is not the most luxurious thing in the world. In the early days of the police these "riders of the plains" used often to meet with adventures of a more or less interesting nature, but patrols at the present day are seldom interrupted by any very serious obstacles. Whiskey smugglers are the chief offenders,

but these seldom offer much resistance when detected. A horse thief, when caught red-handed, however, is a man to be approached with a good deal of caution, for the offence generally means 10 or 15 years' imprisonment, although this class of individuals is becoming more scarce every year.

The North-West Mounted Police numbers 1,000 men at full strength, and is composed of seven different divisions, with headquarters at Regina, Maple Creek, Calgary, Leithbridge, Edmonton, Batoche and Prince Albert. The pay of a policeman is 50 cents per diem for the first year, and five cents additional as good conduct pay for each following year. Mechanics, tradesmen and clerks receive 25 cents a day extra while on duty as such.

Every man whose name appears on the pay roll of the North-West Mounted Police must be a member of the force, and when it is considered that hardly a dollar is spent on outside labor, either skilled or otherwise, it will be understood what a little world in itself, or rather a number of little worlds (each division practically representing one) are contained within the force.



XIV.

AT the end of four months' life at Maple Creek, and six all told in the police, I had so shaped matters that I was able to procure my discharge from the force by purchase, and bid farewell to a business which possessed but few attractions for me, and one which I liked but little. I had made the acquaintance, during the six months, of many good fellows with whom it was not pleasant to part, and whom it will always be a pleasure to remember. The superintendent of "A" Division, in whose office I worked for about three months, was a thorough gentleman in his treatment of the men, which was at all times manly, considerate and impartial. A number of the officers with whom I came in contact here and elsewhere, however, were men of an indifferent stamp, whose qualities in the outside world would commend them but little in any respectable society. More especially among the non-commissioned officers, was this the case. "Put a beggar on horse-back," etc., is a proverb which might very aptly have been applied to a great many of them. But by far the finest characters of all were to be found in the ranks among the men, and this it is that has given the North-West Mounted Police a name and reputation as containing a class of men considerably above the average, which the ignorant snobbishness of many of its officers does nothing to augment.

My brief experience as a member of Canada's North-West Mounted Police being now a thing of the past, naught but the golden future now lay before me, resplendent in all its infinite possibilities for heroic achievements, such as we sometimes foolishly allow ourselves to wistfully contemplate as within our certain reach. As a matter of fact, however, I left the police in pretty much the same shape as I enlisted, having barely enough money with which to pay my fare to Winnipeg, towards where I now turned my face. It was my intention after arriving there to proceed south and cross the border into Uncle Sam's domains, but how well I succeeded in this will be shown anon.

I reached Winnipeg in due course, and after remaining here a couple of days, I found myself, as might have been anticipated, stranded high and dry. After my former experience in this city, the future now took on an ominous appearance, which made me not a little anxious respecting my immediate prospects and well-fare. Employment I soon discovered to be scarce, and that peculiar feeling termed "down in the mouth," notwithstanding every effort to cast it aside, got a very strong hold upon me about this time. I scoured the town again in quest of work, but again without success, and became at length reduced to the necessity of economizing in current expenses by getting along with two meals a day instead of three. This was a sacrifice, which, needless to say, I felt not a little keenly, indicating as it did a condition of affairs to which I could no longer shut my eyes, and which was by no means

comforting to contemplate or dwell upon at any length. This state of affairs, however, if it is my sad duty to record herein, continued for a space of nearly two weeks, and is one I would strongly recommend as highly undesirable for any who may be curious to know just how they might manipulate matters under similar circumstances. In the natural order of events I disposed of the greater part of my personal effects, and by this means helped tide over a rather desperate period in my experience. And yet, strange to say, I came in contact with many young fellows whose condition was little better than my own in this respect, and in whose company I passed many gloomy hours with naught but philosophy and a clay pipe as a solace and comfort.

A young fellow, an ex-member of the North-West Mounted Police, whose acquaintance I made while in these interesting straits, and who at one time had undergone a somewhat similar experience himself, proffered his advice in a very confidential and touching manner, as to the best method to pursue in order to successfully pull along on 10 or 15 cents per diem. He knew of a place he said, where an extraordinary large mutton pie and a huge cup of coffee could be had for the sum of five cents, and another where a tremendous bowl of soup—that was both meat and drink—could be had for the same amount, all of which information, however, afforded me but little genuine comfort. He was truly sympathetic, however, and furnished me with a latch key to his room, which he bade me use whenever I wished

a quiet retreat, and which he insisted I should share with him until on my feet again. Here I generally spent my evenings after the day's fruitless efforts in in search of work.

Forbes was a clever young Scotchman, highly connected at home, but a scapegrace son who had been banished to western Canada, as a country affording every scope for his wild tendencies. He numbered among his friends several characters of a somewhat similar nature to himself,—some of whom were eking out a scanty living as clerks, and others whose friends in the old country provided sufficient means through a lawyer, with which to pay for their board and clothes. These proud and penniless individuals, whom it was impossible to induce to work for their living, would assemble in young Forbes' room each evening to chat, smoke, play cards, and compare notes generally as to their earthly progress. For those who were endeavoring to make their living I entertained a rather sympathetic regard, but towards the others I could feel nothing but disgust. They always formed a merry party, however, and for a time I would banish dull care to the winds when in their company, and help build their bright castles in Spain. Once in a very great while one of the party would announce himself as the proud possessor of 25 cents, to the unspeakable amazement of all concerned. This would be immediately followed by his disappearance out the door with a pitcher, and his subsequent return in a few moments with the same well-filled with beer. Always a harmless quantity when

distributed amongst us all, it often had the effect, however, of lending a little animation to the conversation which it might otherwise have lacked, as well as the disclosure of some interesting facts concerning those present.

Young Forbes was the son of a wealthy landowner in the north of Scotland, handsome and clever but a wild young rake who had squandered thousands in riotous living since his advent into the country. He had travelled extensively throughout the United States, Mexico, and Central America, and his conversation was at times replete with most interesting anecdotes of his wanderings through these countries. He was a particularly well read young fellow, ever light-hearted and hopeful, and a boon companion. Another of the clique was the son of a General in the Imperial Service,—a young fellow of a most lordly mien,—while the others were all characters of a more or less unique nature. True, they were mostly rakes, but after all a rake is not without his good points in many cases, although commonly accorded few by the orthodox judges of human character and conduct at the present day.

The manner of living above outlined was a source of little comfort to me, and I therefore redoubled my efforts to find employment of some kind. I was finally rewarded one day by incidentally hearing of a vacancy in the freight offices of the Northern Pacific Ry., to where I straightway started in order to see what there might be in it, not a little hopeful that a

speedy solution of my difficulty was now at hand. On further enquiry I found that the freight agent *was* in need of some temporary help in his department, and I therefore lost no time in presenting my best compliments to that gentleman and acquainting him with the object of my visit. As a result, and to my infinite delight, my services were engaged as a temporary hand in his office, but on the understanding that the employment might last but two or three weeks, or perhaps a little longer. In my eagerness to get something to do which would enable me to keep afloat, it mattered little to me at the time what it was or how long it might last. It was sufficient to know that I was now engaged by him at the rate of one dollar and a half per day, and that I might now enjoy the luxury of three square meals a day once more. In the course of an experience which it had been my lot to undergo, a dollar bill now took on the proportions of a blanket, and a five cent piece seemed infinite in its possibilities, in contemplating the comparative wealth to which I was now heir as an employé of the N.P. Ry. I might have come into possession of the great railway itself, and I doubt if fortune would have been dubbed any more kindly or propitious. In this dollar and a half a day the panorama of human existence now presented pictures of earthly prosperity, as applied to himself, which only seven meals in as many days past now tended to paint with a splendor such as only a somewhat hungry and underfed individual could properly appreciate.

As for my actual work while in the employ of this Ry., it consisted principally of making out and entering up way bills, bills of lading, and other miscellaneous duties of a freight office, and being a busy season at the time my hands were full from morning till night. My hours were from eight a. m. till six p. m. On the whole I rather liked my new sphere of operations than otherwise, amid the incessant whistling and hissing of engines, and the constant incoming and outgoing of trains; the office being located right alongside the tracks.

The relief of now having sufficient with which to float myself, if only for the time being, was a source of great comfort after what it had lately been my misfortune to undergo, but at the end of two weeks the uncertainty of my position gave rise to some little anxiety as to my future prospect and operations. Economy had heretofore been something of which I knew but little from actual experience, but careful scheming and close figuring now occupied no small portion of my spare time.

In accordance with the understanding on which I had accepted the position, I was informed at the end of four weeks that another week would probably see them through the rush of business, and that my services would thereafter be required no longer. This, of course, did not cause me any great surprise, and I had endeavored in the meantime to find something else to which I might turn my hand at the expiration of this employment, but it was without success. At

the end of the time, therefore, richer only by about four dollars in money, and a little experience in a railway office, I found myself again at my wits' end to know as to what should be my next step. I finally despaired pretty much of being able to get anything to do in Winnipeg, but not having sufficient means with which to successfully betake myself elsewhere, the prospect before me was not of a very roseate hue, as prospects in this world go. One is seldom alone in distress, however, and I encountered not a few fellows in a position very similar to my own, although this added very little to the poetry of the situation.



XV.

WHILE sitting and pondering one afternoon in a hotel near the railway station, I got into conversation with a countrified-looking individual, who informed me in the course of his remarks that he had come from Southern Manitoba, in the neighborhood of Morris. Availing myself of the slightest chance which presented itself, I immediately asked him if he thought I could get anything to do in that part of the country, at the same time explaining my readiness to do almost anything which offered a reasonable return. To my surprise he informed me that a neighbor of his, a farmer living about eight miles out of Morris, had told him to try and procure a man for him while in Winnipeg, and asked me if I had ever done any work on a farm. I was certainly not on the lookout for anything exactly of this nature, but I was now strongly tempted to inform him that as a matter of fact I had been brought up on a farm, and risk all after consequences of so doing. Upon a little reflection, however, I deemed it prudent to be more frank with him and avoid any possible future complications which such a statement might entail, and informed him that my education in this direction had been somewhat neglected, but being healthy and able-bodied I expressed every confidence that I might answer his purpose perfectly if he cared to engage my

services on behalf of his friend. While not authorized to arrange terms in this respect, we finally reached an understanding, and he agreed to take me back with him the following day if I cared to go. To this I gladly assented, and we parted company in the meantime on this understanding.

I turned up the following morning at the appointed hour and place, and we were soon after on our way south towards Morris, some forty odd miles from Winnipeg, where we arrived at about noon. From here to the place of our destination was some eight or nine miles out on the prairie, and there being no available conveyance on hand, we set off on foot. Upon arrival at the place, after a long and tiresome walk in the hot sun, I found a modest little frame house, and one or two small outhouses and a stable surrounding it, which went to make up the headquarters of a not over-prosperous looking establishment. The proprietor, I learned, was a man named Jarvis, who had some two or three years previously bought and settled upon the place. He put in an appearance soon after our arrival, when his friend introduced me as a man he had brought down with him from Winnipeg to assist on the farm. He invited us inside the house with the best grace he could muster, where we found an old shrivelled-up little woman, whom he introduced as his aunt. There being a dearth of chairs about the room, I seated myself upon the end of an upturned box, and a few minutes' conversation ensued, which served to convince me that

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my new employer was a man of somewhat neglected education, intensely ignorant generally, and one in whose company I was, therefore, not likely to derive any great amount of instruction or pleasure. Being a man of little diplomacy, he soon came bluntly to the all-important point as to what wages I expected, my expertness with the plow, and general experience in farm labor. I was, of course, obliged to acknowledge an almost utter lack of experience in this particular line of business, and the confession seemed to please him but little, but I expressed the utmost confidence in my ability to do what might be required of me, and to make myself generally useful about the place. As to the terms, I felt my position a little insecure as yet to attempt any dictation in this respect, and with an air of magnanimity told him I felt very much inclined to leave the matter in his hands, feeling sure, as I expressed it, that he would certainly do the right thing so far as *that* was concerned. He said he wanted to hire a man by the year, and on such an understanding, would be willing to pay \$15 per month. Now I certainly did not relish the idea of hiring myself out on such a place, and with such a man, for a year at a time, and so told him that I would only be willing to work for him by the month at the figure he had named. At this he gruffly told me he wanted a man by the year or none at all. My case I now saw would require a little more skilful handling than I had at first thought necessary, if I hoped to pitch my roving tent for a time within the bounds of

his domains. I realized the awkwardness of my position however, and strongly urged upon him the fact that as I had come all the way from Winnipeg, confidently expecting to get work, was "dead broke," etc. it was but right he should engage me under the circumstances, for a month at all events. This, after considerable hesitation, he finally consented to do, but insisted that it should be only at the rate of \$5 and not \$15 a month—my board, of course included, but expressed very little anxiety to retain my services at all. I accepted his proposition with the best grace I could command compatible with a fervid longing to crack his thick skull, and agreed to start in at the figure named.

The house was a small, barren little hovel, and as the weather was now commencing to assume a somewhat wintry aspect, the prospect before me was far from assuring, viewed in the little of ample and suitable apparel with which to ward off the cold blasts during daytime, and anything like comfortable shelter for the night. I was given a bed up in the garret of the house that night to where I crawled by means of a ladder and the dim light of an old stable lantern. On surveying my new quarters I discovered a straw mattress lying in a heap on a ramshackle old bedstead in a corner, between which and the roof of the house there was scarcely three feet of space, and on which one or two worn-out skins were lying by way of covering. It was by no means what one would term an inviting couch in every respect, and gave rise in my mind to some

rather dismal reflection regarding things generally, and my own position in particular. I shook it down, however, and being rather played out after my day's experience, crawled under the skins, and made myself as comfortable as possible for the night.

At four o'clock the following morning, and while it was still perfectly dark outside, I was awakened by a lusty call by my boss from below to "get a hurry on." I crawled out of bed, banging my head on the roof of the house at the same time, lighted the lantern, and after getting into my clothes descended the ladder into the kitchen, where I found my employer already up and dressed and awaiting my arrival. He lost no time in leading the way out to his stable, where he had some eight or ten head of cattle and a yoke of oxen. Handing me a pitchfork he indicated what was wanted, and in a few moments I was busily engaged in cleaning the place out. This done, the cattle were all watered and fed, after which he moodily led the way to a wood pile, where on an unmistakable hint as to what was required, I proceeded to operate for about half an hour. At six o'clock we adjourned to the house, where we found the little woman, his aunt, at work busily slicing potatoes for the frying pan, and getting things generally in readiness for breakfast, which, for my part, I now considered well earned. We were soon seated at a small table, before a huge plate of porridge and potatoes each, which, together with a loaf of dry bread, constituted our humble repast.

Breakfast over, we again betook ourselves to the

stable, when my boss asked me if I now considered myself sufficiently fortified to commence operations with the plow. I explained that I had never done any of this kind of work in my life, but nevertheless expressed myself as quite confident that I would soon acquire the necessary dexterity with that instrument. The oxen were then taken out of the stable and marched off to the field of our labors, where they were soon hitched on to a plow and handed over to my care, with instructions to commence plowing a parcel of land which had been carefully marked off for the purpose. Never having plowed before, and with a team of oxen now in front of me, it can be readily understood that my position was somewhat bewildering at first, and I felt considerably at a loss to know just how I should commence operations, and in what particular terms I should couch my language in addressing the beasts I now had in hand.

At a word the oxen started off, and by a frantic effort I managed to get the plow in position, and sallied forth over the field. My first furrow could hardly have been termed a marked success. The stretch was a long one, and the oxen seemed perfectly aware that a new and verdant hand was at the helm, and the proverbial stubbornness was not long in coming to the surface when I endeavored to turn them about at the end of the furrow. I began by speaking to them in as kindly and persuasive a tone of voice as I could command, but I soon found them utterly deaf to so mild a form of entreaty, and not at all inclined to move in any direction.

I thereupon assumed a somewhat sterner tone of command, but again without result. There being no one in sight, I hollered at them with all my might and main, and to any but oxen I am sure that an ominous ring might easily have been detected in my voice and manner, which called for immediate and implicit obedience. They maintained an air of stolid indifference, however, and with maddening persistency firmly stood their ground. After completely exhausting the strength of my vocal organs in this manner, I concluded to take a more severe method of enforcing my commands, and looked about for some tangible means with which to convince my friends that I meant exactly what I said when I hollered "gee" or "haw" at them. I was not long in finding a stout club, by the help of which I finally succeeded in making a little faster progress in wheeling them about, but even then their stubbornness was something wonderful to behold. They seemed to know as well as myself that I was not an adept at the business, and did all in their power to harass and worry me, and make plowing in my eyes something to be religiously detested. With the aid of my club, however, I meted out measure for measure, and if at the end of the day my voice was hoarse and husky, and my nerves shattered with combatting their stubbornness, I felt not a little consoled with the fact, that a more whole some and heartfelt clubbing than they had received at my hands, would have been impossible to administer without danger of serious or permanent injury.

The actual plowing I accomplished was probably less

than one-half what an experienced hand might have done in the same time, but I nevertheless felt tolerably satisfied, under the circumstances, with the progress I had made. Needless to say I was thoroughly exhausted and played out after my first day's work, and was ready to turn in very soon after having supper.

A heavy fall of rain commenced about half-past seven that evening, which aroused the lethargy of my boss as he sat staring into vacancy, and seemed to set him thinking in a manner I was at a loss to understand. Down the rain came in torrents, and when with reasonable certainty it seemed likely to continue for some time, he gathered himself slowly together and calmly informed me that there was a lot of half-stacked barley in one of his fields about a mile and a-half off, which he said would have to be looked after at once or blue ruin would most certainly follow. He asked me to don my coat, arm myself with a fork, and follow him; all in a most aggravating and perfectly take-for-granted air. I looked askance at him for a moment, without moving from my seat, when he remarked: "Of course you don't mind the rain." "Oh! no, no, not at all" I replied, smothering my indignation as best I could, for I was played out with my day's toil, and was just on the point of turning in to enjoy a night's well earned repose. Had I not pitied the man in his trouble, I would most certainly have refused to move under any pretext, but on seeing the situation, and the threatened destruction of his grain, I finally consented to accompany him. Each

with a fork over shoulder we started out in the direction of the barley field, where we arrived after a stumbling march over the rough prairie of nearly two miles, thoroughly soaked and besmeared with mud from head to foot. Little time was lost in getting to work, and amidst the down pour of rain, and with barley burs playing havoc down our backs—or down my back at all events—we worked away at the stack until properly shaped, when we trudged off again through the rain and mud towards the house. A happy ending, I thought,—a most touching finale indeed to my first day's experience as a farmer! When we reached the house it was in a most pitiable state of general disorder, and my discomfort was not a little aggravated by the barley burs which had found their way down my back, and which caused an almost endless amount of scratching and squirming. I got under my skins that night shivering with the cold, and in a most distressing state of general disability after my first day's efforts, and firmly vowed that the healthful pursuit of farming, if my first day's experience was any correct indication of the matter, was something which I would abandon at the first opportunity.



XVI.

AT four o'clock the next morning the voice of my boss again aroused me from my peaceful slumbers, and little time was lost before another day's work was ushered in. Lighting the lantern, I drew on my damp clothes, and crawled down the ladder leading to the kitchen, where my boss was awaiting my arrival. We were soon hard at work cleaning the stables, hauling water, feeding the cattle, and chopping wood for breakfast. Breakfast over, I again resumed plowing, but with a grim determination this time to wallop those oxen into a state of implicit obedience, or die in the attempt. Well, I knocked and clubbed them in a most heartless manner, and almost incessantly, and at the end of my second day's plowing I had the grim satisfaction of knowing that they had now commenced to realize in a very marked degree that I meant nothing but business, and were less prone to take the "Gee" turn when I hollered "Haw," and "Haw" when I hollered "Gee" than on the previous day, and I also succeeded in accomplishing a good deal more work.

At the end of my first week at this business I felt that I had good reason to congratulate myself on having gained considerable experience in the art of handling a yoke of oxen. I had shouted my voice clean away, however, and it now required the greatest effort to speak above a whisper. One prominent feature in

connection with this business, which may be termed specially demoralizing, is the constant provocation that exists to employ language in dealing with the beasts which could hardly be considered at all times as strictly orthodox. This temptation is so strong in fact that I know of no one—and I am acquainted with many pious people—for whom I could vouch to withstand it but a very short time at a stretch. One certainly can't sing hymns and plow with oxen at the same time! I used sometimes to watch my employer at work with them, and for artful, unadulterated and comprehensive swearing he was by long odds ahead of anything I ever heard or hope to hear in this direction. His flow of language in this respect was most original, not to say phenomenal.

One night about six o'clock he was driving the oxen home from a distant field, when darkness overtook him before he knew it, and subsequently rendered the remainder of his journey somewhat interesting. A small, sluggish stream ran through the farm, and when about two hundred yards from the stable, where the ground on either side was of a rank, marshy nature, he stuck fast, the waggon sinking axle deep in the mud, and the oxen up to their bellies. I was standing at the door of the stable at the time awaiting his return. It was a calm, still night on the prairies, and as I looked out at the awful blackness about me, and then at the stream of light gleaming from the windows of the lonely little shanty which afforded my nightly shelter, my thoughts wandered away to happier scenes

and I became pensive. Suddenly, and without the slightest warning, there broke upon the still air a loud bellow, half human, half fiendish. I had little time for reflection, for the sound was soon repeated, when I was able to distinguish the voice of a man in the distance. I immediately shut the stable door, and walked hurriedly in the direction from whence came the sound, hardly knowing what to expect. When within about fifty yards of the place, I stopped to listen, thinking I heard my name pronounced at intervals in a half-frenzied, wild kind of style. In another moment the situation was partially explained. I recognized the voice of my boss, and was also the unwilling auditor of language concerning myself and things in general, which made me think the final day had at last arrived, and that heaven's most powerful enemy was now before me himself, pouring out a few fiery denunciations before finally consigning me to my awful doom. I cautiously approached, unseen and unheard as yet, to within ten yards of the spot, when lo! and behold! the whole situation was explained at a glance. There were the oxen grunting and tugging in a vain effort to extricate themselves and the waggon from the mire, while my employer stood by heaping curses galore upon everything in general. He had long since exhausted the stereotyped terms of common profanity, and was now indulging in a streak of originality that caused my lower jaw to unconsciously drop with wonder and amazement at such heretofore undreamt of versatility

in this direction. His denunciations were most sweeping, and his language was made to vary and apply to everything and everybody within his knowledge. I felt it would be useless to announce my presence at this stage, and so stood by unobserved until I actually saw the man lie down on the ground and wildly kick and howl in a frenzy of insane rage. "Alas! those oxen again," quoth I to myself. When the storm had subsided somewhat he picked himself up and started towards the house, evidently in search of me, when I stopped him as he was walking away, and asked him what under the sun was the matter. This he signified by merely pointing at the oxen in a dazed kind of way, not trusting himself to again open his mouth. My presence seemed to renew his courage somewhat, and, after resorting to various means, we finally succeeded in getting the oxen and waggon both extricated at the end of about two hours' hard work. Needless to say it was a great relief to all concerned, but the incident served to very forcibly demonstrate the infallibility of human resolutions, for it was only the night before, as we were sitting smoking our pipes in the kitchen, that my employer informed me of his late conversion at a salvation army meeting in Morris, and his determination to henceforth "lead a new life."

So much for oxen, in so far as they relate to human patience! I broke about ten acres of virgin soil with them, and considered my knowledge of their peculiarities not a little augmented in consequence, but my

experience left not the least desire to contract any more extended acquaintance in this direction.

Threshing season was now upon us, and after some consultation it was decided that I should have the honor of playing the *rôle* of cook during the time this was going on. There were eight or ten ravenously hungry men to be looked after, and I was altogether at a loss to understand why I should have been singled out for this work, being decidedly green at the business; but on the whole I managed in one form or another to cater with some degree of success to their not over fastidious tastes. Quantity and not quality I soon discovered was the main requisite, and in this respect the first meal gave rise to some rather serious reflections regarding the cook's judgment of a hungry man's appetite. I took pains, therefore, to see that there was no cause for complaint thereafter in this respect, even though the pork was at times decidedly raw or badly burnt, as the case might be. I did overhear some of the men pass a few cruel remarks regarding "that cook" not entirely complimentary, but on the whole they were a pretty well-fed looking crowd when they took their departure, and I don't think I created any permanent or bitter enemies as a result of my efforts in this *rôle*. In fact I felt myself worthy of hearty congratulation that no lives were sacrificed as a result of my labors.

XVII.

I WORKED on this farm for a space of a month, was fed principally on potatoes and bread, became expert in swearing, handling oxen, chopping oak stumps, and in general appearance might easily have passed as one who had been brought up and worked on a farm all my life. With my month's pay, the seat out of my pants, and toes out of my boots—though still hopeful—I bid my employer a glad farewell, and trudged off one morning at daybreak to Morris.

I was in somewhat of a quandary now as to where I should next head for, although I had come to borrow very little concern in this respect. On arrival at the railway station, however, I concluded to cross the boundary line into the Northern Dakota. And this I was desirous at the same time of doing in as cheap a manner as possible, and thereupon resolved to try my skill after the style of those who travel at the expense of the railways when their own means are not sufficient for the purpose. After deciding upon my plan of action, I purchased a ticket for twenty-five cents, good to the next station south, boarded the train as it was passing through, and ensconced myself comfortably in the smoking-car, where I resolved to remain on the strength of my twenty-five cent ticket just as long as it was possible to do so. Before our arrival at the station it was duly taken up, but when the train pulled up I calmly

retained my seat instead of getting out. The next station on was some ten or twelve miles, and this I determined to reach at the expense of the railway company if at all possible to do so. The car I was in was full, and no particular notice been taken of my presence by the conductor, I remained unmolested for some time. When we were nearing the next station he again put in an appearance for the purpose of collecting the tickets of those whose destination was here and on perceiving me still in the car, he tapped me gently on the shoulder, and asked me what I was doing there. He was a keen-looking fellow, and I deemed it best to treat him with all possible frankness. "What am I doing here?" I asked evasively. "Yes," he replied, sternly, "what are you doing there? Don't you know you should have got off at the last station?" I told him there was a mistake somewhere, that I was destined for the next station on, but I soon saw it was utterly impossible to make him see things in my light. He demanded fare, which I stoutly refused to pay, and then ordered me off the train. Of course I remonstrated, though I really felt well contented at having covered the distance I did for the sum of twenty-five cents, but I finally alighted in a very patronizing style, threatening at the same time to write his superintendent at once.

At this station I awaited the arrival of the next train south bound, purchased another ticket for a small sum, and so finally got across the border into Pembina, North Dakota, where I resolved to pitch my rov-

ing tent, for a time at all events. I congratulated myself on having travelled quite a respectable distance on "cheek," and was not at all dissatisfied with the accomplishment.

Pembina I soon discovered to be a comparatively lively little place alongside the towns I had visited on the Canadian side of the line, and here I made up my mind to see what I could do in the way of procuring employment. It was the month of December, the weather was bitterly cold, my clothes were worn and thin, and altogether it seemed advisable to call a halt for a time in my promiscuous wanderings.

After tramping about the town for a while I located myself at a small hotel, where I procured my supper and passed the night. The following morning after breakfast I walked about the place in quest of work, but the prospects seemed of a very discouraging character. It is a precarious business, this looking for work in a strange place, but when it is one's only recourse it is astonishing with what stolid persistency it can be pursued, and seldom without reaching the aim in view in some shape or other, if one but means business.

After exhausting the ordinary channels in quest of what I was after, I finally tried the station agent as a last resort, and was rewarded with an offer that sat anything but lightly on my crop. It consisted of shovelling coal at nights for a compensation of \$35 per month. Little did I ever dream that things would come to such a pass as this, and yet there I was at this time with no other recourse in the world but to beg, steal,

or shovel coal, and so shovel coal I resolved it should be. An understanding was soon reached, and off I marched out of the station, with every appearance of gratification I could assume at so unsavory a prospect as a coal-bin for the scene of my next night's operations. The prospect, however, was not at all cheerful, and the matter preyed upon my mind until I finally concluded that I would *not* shovel coal yet a while. In my previous ramble about the place, I had noticed a lawyer's shingle hanging in front of a door on the main street, and now turned my steps in this direction. Numbering among my accomplishments a thorough knowledge of shorthand, and being a very fair penman, I resolved to turn them to some account if possible, before finally making my debut in a coal-bin. I was quite conscious, however, that my personal appearance at this time was decidedly against me in seeking employment of this kind, even in so small a place as Pembina, and was not therefore, very sanguine as to results. Upon entering the office imagine my surprise and disappointment on beholding a young man in the very position I was seeking to fill, and in the act of taking down in shorthand a letter which was then being dictated by a gentleman seated on the other side of the room. I briefly explained the reason of my visit, although I was strongly tempted to turn and go out upon seeing the shape things were in, when I was requested to take a seat. In a few moments I explained more fully what I was after, and was listened to with what seemed to me a surprising amount of attention, con-

sidering my claims to consideration on the score of personal appearance, but this was soon explained by the fact that his present shorthand writer was about leaving him for Minneapolis.

In a few moments I had succeeded in establishing my identity to a certain extent, and was forthwith received in a very friendly spirit. He informed me that the man at present in his office was leaving him in a few days, and that if I was capable of filling his position he would gladly give me a trial on the following day. Needless to say this proposition was duly and warmly accepted with thanks.

I put in an appearance the following day, when I was assigned some work in his office, and was that evening told I might consider myself engaged, if I so desired.

And now followed a period of three months, during which time I filled the *role* of a lawyer's clerk in a small town, and thus succeeded in adding another phase to an already somewhat varied experience since the day I left Toronto. Of these three months, however, there is but little of interest to relate. I located myself in a small hotel, owned and run by a French woman and her daughter, where I occupied a very small, cramped-up *little* room. My actual work was light, and the greater portion of my time was occupied in delving into miscellaneous books of law. My employer was the State attorney for the county, and one of the big and influential men of the town, and a gentleman in every sense of the word. His law practice

was an extensive one for a man in so small a place as Pembina, and I gained not a few points on law as practised in Northern Dakota during my stay here. The common forms of redress are very simple, and a man who has no litigation on his hands in this country is of little importance in public estimation. Consequently, my employer's practice was of no small value. He was well and extensively known throughout the whole State, and I have since heard has been appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court.

Of the prominent, or, rather, unique characters of the town, I can recall one or two who lived at the same hotel with me.

An erstwhile sheriff of the Province of Manitoba had some years since, upon losing his office, shaken the dust of Canadian soil from off his feet, and located in Pembina, where he had remained ever since. Having been a man of some little importance in his day, as a result of a friendship of long standing between himself and the late Sir John A. Macdonald, he had not been in Pembina a great while before his altered circumstances aroused a kindly interest in the old fellow, and he was created a judge of the Probate Court. The dignity and honor thus thrust upon the old man, instead of creating a spirit of thankfulness on his part towards his benefactors, had the effect of imbuing him with an erroneous sense of his own importance, and making him a most garrulous and crotchety old codger. One who had been so soon singled out among his fellows in a strange land, and elevated to a position

of public importance and responsibility, was one who of necessity should have his little ways about him, evidently thought the judge. He was not satisfied with having it perfectly understood that the Probate Court had for its Judge no less a personage than himself, but he would fain have had it understood also that the Probate Judge of Pembina County was an old gentleman beside whom the Governor of the State was altogether of secondary importance. The consequence of this was that the Judge in time became a very objectionable character in public estimation, and the party with which he had become allied took the first opportunity of quietly but very effectively ousting the old man from office and leaving him entirely upon his own bottom.

The Judge was a man who had crossed the seventieth milestone in life. In personal appearance he was as straight as a ramrod, with long, flowing white beard, and a pair of eyes that shone out through his gold-rimmed spectacles like balls of fire. He had long since abandoned that fastidious habit of wearing collars or neckties, and since his retirement from office his clothes commenced to show unmistakable signs of decay. In temperament the old man was of a decidedly aggressive turn, and in debate it was absolutely necessary to acknowledge the Judge your master unless you wished to run the risk of having his cane brought down with a crash upon your head. The Judge was not a man who would sit quietly about in the bar room of the hotel and listen to any pessimistic discourse without letting you know that he was there,

and without attempting by a master stroke to sweep aside all erroneous ideas, and put every body right.

Nothing pleased him better than to sit at the head of his table in the dining room of the little hotel, and hold forth upon any given subject in such a manner that all might hear and see him. If allowed to proceed uninterrupted in these expatiations, the Judge would soon wax grandly eloquent, and if, as was too often the case, he had been out "seeing his friends about town" it was with difficulty he could be restrained from mounting the table outright.

The Judge had for his great croney the "Major," an ideal old Yankee in talk and appearance, who had some years since retired from active life as a market gardener, and was now finishing his days quietly by the fireside, on the strength of a well-earned competence which he had succeeded in putting together in his latter days of toil. The Major and the "Jedge" liked nothing better than to get a St. Paul paper each, and sitting beside the fire on cold days, discuss problems of state and national interest with all-absorbing attention.

"Jedge," the Major might be heard to remark, looking up from his paper at the latter, "Now, what's *yer* honest opinion about this 'ere Grand Forks Convention? Be *you* going down?"

Whereupon the Judge would branch off in a most eloquent style about the Grand Forks Convention, and conventions in general, to the tune of "jest so Jedge, jest so," from the Major, who would intently take in

every word which would drop from the Judge's lips. Their views occasionally clashed, however, when, of the two it was often difficult to decide who was the victor. Their discussions sometimes led to a little exchange of personal compliments too, when the quiet persistency of the Major, and the terrible wrath of the Judge was something too rich for anything! The landlady was the only one who could in a measure restore peace at such times, when it often became necessary for her to remind the Judge before all present that he was an "ould rascal, and hadn't paid he's board for tree mons back." This generally had the desired effect on one so sensitive as the Judge, and with fire in his eyes he would strut off and leave the field in possession of the Major, who might be heard to remark, "I guess the Judge is dead beat this time, sure." After these exhibitions they would seldom speak for the remainder of the day, but the sun was never known to have gone down on their wrath.

A frequent visitor to my employer's office was a certain Methodist minister. In vain I often tried to account for the deep interest he manifested at all times regarding the practice of law, until one day I was thunderstruck to hear him heave a great sigh and deliver himself thus: "Damn it all, I'm gettin' sick of preachin' to the wooden heads in this town. There ain't no money in it, and there ain't no thanks. Why, I can't get credit from my head pusher and boss of the Sunday school for a cord of wood even. I've just about made up my mind that I made a serious miscal-

culatation when I studied for the holy ministry, and so I'm goin' to quit. Law's the thing for me, and law it's goin' to be." He borrowed a few books and forthwith entered upon his studies of law, but with what success I have never learned.

Strange to say, Northern Dakota, well-known as one of the hardest states on the frontier, is an out-and-out prohibition state. How such a measure was ever successfully carried by public sentiment is a standing marvel, but the fact remains nevertheless. By this, however, it is not for one moment to be supposed that the law is lived up to, beyond the fact that it does not countenance the issue of sale of licenses for the disposal of liquor. In other respects it can hardly be termed a very glowing success. There were occasional cases in Pembina where a man would be obliged to shut down his "blind pig," as they are called and cross the border for a time, but it was generally the result of some robbery or case of assault having been perpetrated upon his premises rather than the mere fact of his having sold liquor. This state of affairs exists to a much greater extent, however, along the frontier than farther south, for a few moments' warning is sufficient to give a man ample opportunity of making himself scarce by crossing the line into Canada. In the interior of the state greater caution is exercised, and "blind pigs" are not quite so numerous.

The city of Grand Forks, some sixty miles south of Pembina, is commonly known to be in the State of North Dakota. The Red River divides the States of

North Dakota and Minnesota at this point, and since the advent of Prohibition, the population of the city has become considerably augmented by the addition of "East Grand Forks," a settlement on the Minnesota side of the river which boasts of saloons and liquor shops to the number of forty within a radius of half a mile. So much for the successful carrying out of Prohibition. A thirsty man needs but to walk across the bridge to forget (be he particularly thirsty) that such an institution is extant.

While in Pembina I was myself honored on several occasions with most tempting offers to abandon the law, and cast in my lot with the proprietor of a "blind pig." Preferring to let well enough alone, however, I gave the business a wide berth. Needless to say, the quality of liquor sold in many of these places was of the vilest description, not to say the rankest poison. Alcohol and burnt sugar was a common substitute, and in the absence of this, I have seen men drink Pain Killer, Florida water, and other strange decoctions.

I cannot conclude this brief record of the time I spent in Northern Dakota without mentioning the fact that during my stay in Pembina I witnessed one of the worst blizzards with which the country had been visited for years, and one in whose trail the loss of not a few lives followed. A strange spectacle was presented on the streets of Pembina when it finally subsided, which was only after two days of continual howling of the most terrific blasts, during which time the air was full of snow and ice. Some parts of the ground,

after the storm, were laid perfectly bare, while drifts of snow and ice in others were mountains high. I remember with what spell-bound wonder I beheld a drift in front of our office, a two-story structure, which was completely buried out of sight. It was the largest one in town, and, for the first time in his life, it was said of Mr. K——, that he had been "snowed under."

While at work one afternoon in the office, I was not a little surprised upon receiving a telegram from Winnipeg, requesting my presence there at once. After bidding my friends good-bye, I took my departure the following morning, in a good deal better shape, I am glad to record, than when I first landed in the town. The message subsequently turned out to be a summons for my return to Toronto, which I answered by taking the next train.

